

"WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE?"

LESSONS FROM THE MINOR
PROPHETS

EDITOR: GARY K. YOUNG
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THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE:

“What doth the Lord require?” (Micah 6: 8) - Introduction

Gary Young

It is wonderful to be here once again at the 17th Annual Eastern Shore Lectureship. This has become a major event in the calendar, not only of the Eastern Shore congregation, but also of many of the churches of Australia and even further afield. This year we have brethren assembled from Australia, New Zealand and the United States, and we want to extend a warm welcome to all of you, and express the prayer that you will have a safe, enjoyable and edifying time here at Eastern Shore.

The theme for this year's lectureship is “What doth the Lord Require: Lessons from the Minor Prophets”. These books, the last twelve of the Old Testament in the order used by most English Bibles, were grouped together as a single book in the Hebrew canon and referred to as “The Book of the Twelve”. Despite the fact that often these books are quite neglected, the fact is that these are supremely relevant books to the Christian today. Contained in them are a huge number of lessons, which teach us some extremely important and relevant principles which we can most certainly make use of in our day to day lives. The struggles of the ancient Israelites are not so very different to the difficulties which we face in our modern world: while technology, communication and the like have gone through many changes, man himself has not.

The Minor Prophets span the history of the Divided Kingdom period of Israelite history, with the exception of the last three, which come from the period of the Restoration of Israel and the beginning of the Second Commonwealth. Through this time the people of Israel faced problems with idolatry, immorality, foreign enemies, domestic discord, corrupt rulers and internal apathy, and much more besides. Each of these issues is dealt with in the course of these books, and as we study them we will see how very comprehensively they deal with these issues. Such problems, of course, are far from unique to ancient Israel - they are very much still current, and the way in which God deals with these problems through the avenue of the Minor Prophets makes these works a very important focus for our study.

While the date of some of the books is disputed, nevertheless we have a broad idea of the background for each of these books. The first nine come from the period of the divided kingdom, when the people of God were divided into two small kingdoms, Judah and Israel; and, after the fall of Israel to the Assyrians in 722 BC, Judah alone. This was a period that was characterised by idolatry and apostasy, especially in the Northern kingdom of Israel. Hosea, for example, spoke of the state of that kingdom during his ministry:

Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land (Hosea 4: 1).

The task of many of the prophets was to call back the people to obedience to God, for many in that period had forsaken the Lord. Indeed, it was for this very reason that God was allowing the pagan nations of Assyria and then Babylon to descend upon Palestine and despoil it. Habakkuk struggled with this concept, but finally came to an understanding that God is just and He would not allow the invaders to go unpunished:

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation (Habakkuk 3: 18).

Within the Israelite kingdoms, there was political corruption and evil. Those who were supposed to be taking care of the needs of the people were instead stealing their livelihood, they were receiving bribes and perverting judgement. Amos, among others, protested these tendencies and proclaimed the need to restore judgement and for the rulers to behave in accordance with the trust and responsibility that God had placed in them:

But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream (Amos 5: 24).

At the same time, the enemies of God's people, including the Edomites and others, were lifting themselves up with pride and exultation when they saw the difficulties that God's people were encountering, and the punishment they were undergoing. Part of the task of the prophets was to rebuke the pride of these enemies, and to inform them that they too were amenable to God's justice and that God would punish their pride:

Though thou mount on high as the eagle, and though thy nest be set among the stars, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord (Obadiah 4).

In amongst all these trials and difficulties, however, the prophets never lost sight of the need of the people to have a personal faith, and the necessity of personal piety and responsibility toward God:

And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God (Micah 6: 8).

All these issues and struggles find a resonance today. While the specific background may be different, the basic problems which were faced by the Israelites in those days and which were addressed by the minor prophets remain the same as the basic problems we face today. There are still enemies of God who are filled with pride; there are still corrupt rulers; there are still those who corrupt and pervert the religion of truth; and there still remains the central need for each of us to individually devote ourselves to God and to His Kingdom.

The last three books belong to a more hopeful time, but one which came with its own challenges, some still tougher than the challenges that had characterised the previous books. Judah was carried away into Babylonian captivity in 586 BC, and it was not until the Babylonians were conquered by the Persian Empire under Cyrus that the Jews were allowed to return to their homeland, in 536 BC. Despite the opportunity of renewal, there were also many many obstacles to be overcome. There were foreign enemies who wanted to see the Jews kept at their current level of powerlessness, while there were also many within Israel who were trying to compromise with the powerful surrounding nations, and also to compromise the Law of God in so doing.

Part of the work of reconstruction particularly involved the restoration of the temple of God, which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Some of the earliest returnees had commenced the work of reconstruction, but in the face of opposition the rebuilding work had come to a halt. God sent at this time the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, whose task it was to inspire a religious revival, and also to inspire the people of God to rise up

and to build the temple once more. Under the guidance of their leaders and the teaching of the prophets, the task was completed in 510 BC.

However, the problems of God's people were far from over: there was still corruption of various sorts, and the last of the minor prophets, Malachi, had to deal with issues of religious laxness and compromise. The people were complaining that God was no longer blessing them, and yet they had been offering the halt and the blind as offerings in defiance of what the Law of Moses said. In addition, they had refused to follow the Law of God regarding marriage and had divorced their Israelite wives to marry pagan women. Malachi told them to put God to the test: do His will, in the knowledge that God will indeed return those promised blessings when they did so. Here too, we see principles which are supremely relevant to the life of a Christian today, for Jesus also promises us that our necessities will be taken care of when we seek first God and His Kingdom (Matthew 6: 33).

One thread that runs throughout all the minor prophets, and indeed through the entire Old Testament, is that of the coming Messiah. The message that God was sending a Kinsman - Redeemer, a King, a Governor, was one that we find referred to in numerous prophecies throughout the books we have under consideration in this lectureship. We read prophecies about His birth, about His betrayal, about His kingship and priesthood, and much besides. It is fitting then that Malachi, the last written book of the Old Testament, closes with a prophecy concerning the one who would open the revelation of the New Testament, the one who would act as the harbinger of the Son of God Himself, the one whom we know as John the Baptist:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse (Malachi 4: 5-6).

ORDER AND TIME IN WHICH THE PROPHETS LIVED

1. Jonah-----Prophesied between 823 B.C. and 783 B. C. in the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel. (2 Kings 14:25). (From Adam Clarke). (Smith's Bible Dictionary gives dates 840 B. C. to 784 B. C.)
2. Amos-----Prophesied from 823 B.C. to about 785 B.C. in the reign of Uzziah, King of Judah, and in that of Jeroboam II, King of Israel. (Smith's Bible Dictionary--810 B.C. to 785 B.C.)
3. Hosea-----Prophesied from about 809 B.C. to about 698 B.C. in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in that of Jeroboam II, King of Israel. (Hosea 1:1). (Smith's Bible Dictionary--800 B.C. to 725 B.C.)
4. Isaiah-----Prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah. (Smith's Bible Dictionary--765 B.C. to 698 B.C.)
5. Joel----- (Smith's Bible Dictionary gives dates 810 B.C. to 795 B. C.) Clarke feels with others that he comes much later about 697 B.C. to 660 B.C.
6. Micah-----propheied between 757 B.C. and 698 B.C. in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. (Micah 1:1). Smith's Bible Dictionary gives 758 B.C. to 699 B. C.
7. Nahum-----is supposed to have propheied between 720 B.C. and 698 B.C., in the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah. Smith's Bible Dictionary gives the same dates. Young in his Introduction gives 664 B.C. to 612 B.C.
8. Zephaniah-----Propheied between 640 B.C. and 609 B.C. in the reign of Josiah king of Judah (Zeph. 1:1). Smith gives the same dates.
9. Jeremiah-----Propheied between 629 B.C. and 588 B.C., and is supposed to have died in Egypt about two years later. Smith gives dates of 628 B.C. to 585.
10. Habakkuk-----is thought to have propheied between 606 B.C. and 598 B.C. in the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. (Smith gives dates 612 B.C. to 598 B.C.)
11. Daniel-----Smith's Bible Dictionary gives dates 606 B.C. to 534 B.C.
12. Obadiah-----Propheied soon after 587 B.C. between the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the destruction of the Edomites by the same prince. Smith's Bible Dictionary gives dates 588 B.C. to 583 B.C.
13. Ezekiel-----Smith's Bible Dictionary gives dates 595 B.C. to 536 B.C.
14. Haggai-----Propheied about 520 B.C. after the return from Babylon. Smith--520 B.C. to 518 B.C.
15. Zechariah-----Propheied from 520 B.C. to about 518 B.C., and was co-worker of Haggai. (Zech. 1:1). Smith gives dates 520 B.C. to 510 B.C.
16. Malachi-----is generally believed to have propheied about 436 B.C. Smith's Bible Dictionary gives dates 436 B.C. to 397 B.C.

Captivity of Israel (ten tribes) occurred about 734 B.C.

Captivity of Judah (two tribes) occurred about 606 B.C. Captivity lasted from 606 B.C. to 536 B. C. (70 years).

A Study of The Prophecies

INTRODUCTION

A study of the prophets will enrich the life of anyone who applies himself to learn their teaching; conversely, it will only add to the confusion of those who would use their writings as a basis on which to speculate about the future. An understanding of the prophets' teaching concerning Israel and Judah, the heathen nations of that day, and the Messiah who was to come will strengthen the faith of the one who sees the fulfillment of those predictions in history and in the New Covenant. An understanding of how the prophets dealt with the religious, political, social, and moral corruptions in their day will give courage to the Lord's faithful today. Studying the consequences of Israel's disobedience and understanding the principles on which God dealt with that disobedience will help one better to read the signs of the times. A knowledge of the writings of the prophets will make reading the daily newspaper and secular magazines and listening to news reports of present-day world events more meaningful. This is not to say that through the prophets God foretold any specific event of today, or pointed to any individual or nation of today. But by faith in the immutability of God and knowledge of the principles on which God dealt with the situations of that day, one will conclude that God will act in a like manner today. It is therefore with intent to learn more

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about God and His methods of dealing with His people in sin and with sinful nations of the world that this study is approached.

In times of spiritual and moral repression and decay, God raised up men (prophets) in whose mouth He put His word and whom He sent to the people in an effort to turn them back to Himself. The prophets emphasized the sole deity of Jehovah, pointed out His majesty, holiness, righteousness, and justice, and made known the principles on which He would act toward people—both His own and the heathen. Jehovah used the prophets to point out the wickedness of His people in contrast to His infinite qualities and character. These servants of Jehovah declared that He is infinite in knowledge, in wisdom, and in understanding; therefore, He can declare the end from the beginning, and does not err in His actions. Also, He is infinite in power; therefore, He can carry out His divine purpose. In all His attributes God is immutable; His principles never change, nor does His application of these principles change. In this knowledge of God man can depend on Him to act and react at all times according to a definite pattern. Isaiah shows this part of the prophet's work as he summarizes Jehovah's claim to absolute and infinite deity when he quotes God as saying, "I, even I, am Jehovah; and besides me there is no saviour. I have declared, and I have saved, and I have showed" (43:11ff.); "I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God" (44:6); "I am Jehovah, that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth; . . . that frustrateth the signs of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers" (44:24-26), "declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (46:10).

Among the writings of the prophets are to be found some of the most beautiful, majestic, and artistic expressions of all literature. Although the prophet was inspired and spoke as the Spirit directed, Jehovah allowed the personality and background of each man to shine through his message, making the book throb with both the life of man and of God.

The reader may become acquainted with each and know them as individuals, rejoicing, sorrowing, praising, weeping, lamenting, and hoping, as he would come to know a man of his own age. The language of the prophets is in no way impoverished or penurious. It vibrates with the thunder of judgment as the lion roars or the earth quakes. On the other hand it may possess the tenderness of a mother for her babe as she takes it in her arms and calms its trembling fears. The prophet may make a direct appeal to the conscience; or he may speak in parables, metaphors, and similes. He may use hyperbole bordering on exaggeration that taxes the reader's credulity, or he may speak with such simplicity that one marvels at the failure of his audience to grasp his point. The prophet may speak of his message as having originated in a dream, a vision, or a direct word from Jehovah to his own soul; but always and by all means he is striving to make known the will of Jehovah to His people. Some of the words of the divinely inspired spokesmen fire the imagination of the reader and thrill his very soul. Consider the words of Obadiah as he describes the boast of Edom and Jehovah's reply, "Though thou mount on high as the eagle, and though thy nest be set among the stars, I will bring thee down from thence, saith Jehovah" (v. 4). The words of Amos bring before one the vivid picture of a mountain cataract as he says, "But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (5:24). Where can one find a fuller summary of Jehovah's requirement of man in fewer words than in Micah's classic question, "and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (6:8)? Nowhere is a deeper and well-founded faith expressed more simply and fervently than in the words of Habakkuk as he sees all avenues of food taken away by the invading destroyer, then says, though it all fail, "Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength; and he maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and will make me to walk upon my high places" (3:18 ff.). Wherefore, aside from the spiritual enlightenment through reading the prophets, one will find his study rewarding and enriching from a purely literary point of view. The writings of the prophets will ever stand as jewels of divine revelation and as classics among the giants of literature of all time.

Instructors Under the Old Covenant

Under the law there were at least five classes of speakers: Moses, the lawgiver; the wise men, who gave counsel; priests, who taught the law; prophets, through whom God spoke His word; and psalmists, who were the singers or poets in Israel. Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak of three of these classes as being important to the instruction of the people:

Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet (Jer. 18:18).

Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumor shall be upon rumor; and they shall seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders (Ezek. 7:26).

1. Moses: lawgiver

Since the law was given but once, there would be of necessity only one lawgiver, Moses, the servant of Jehovah (Neh. 8:1, 14; 9:13-14; John 1:17; 7:19).

2. Wise men: counsel

The function of these was to give sound advice on matters of life. The first mention of such persons is that of a wise woman (II Sam. 14:1'24); also, the second person to be characterized as wise was a woman (II Sam. 20:16-22). The most outstanding wise man of Israel's history was Solomon. The canonical books of wisdom are Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Some include the Song of Solomon. As Eiselen has pointed out:

The wise men did not appeal directly to the conscience as did the prophets, but rather to the mind through counsel and argument, though their ultimate aim was to reach the conscience and through it influence conduct and life.¹

3. Priests: law

The special function of the priests was related to the law. Since the law was civil and ecclesiastical, their function was twofold: first, to declare, interpret, and teach the law;

second, to tend the sacrificial duties. Therefore when apostasy came, the priests were in a large measure responsible for it (see Lev. 10:8'11; Hos. 4:6; Ezek. 22:26; Mal. 2:7).

4. Prophets: word

The mission of the prophet was to communicate to Israel the divine word. Though they did predict, it may be said of them that so far as their work as a whole was concerned they were proclaimers rather than predictors.

5. Psalmists: poets

The poets or "sweet singers" complete the group after Moses. Posterity is indebted to these for the Psalms. In them are to be found expressions of the deepest emotions and feelings of the human spirit. Some reflect, others express, many foretell; but all seek to glorify God.

The Meaning of the Word "Prophet"

It is generally agreed that the etymology of the word presents difficulties; however, the use of the word in Scripture makes clear the meaning, since Scripture is its own best interpreter.

The word is defined as follows: "According to the uniform teaching of the Bible the prophet is a speaker of or for God. His words are not the production of his own spirit, but come from a higher source."² "To boil up like a fountain (Heb.). in both the Old and the New Testaments, [a prophet] is one who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit speaks the words and the thoughts of God, whether they relate to the past, to the present, or to the future."³ "One who spoke in God's stead."⁴

The meaning of the word is more satisfactorily learned from its use in Scripture. God said to Moses that Aaron would be "thy spokesman . . . a mouth" (Exod. 4:16); also, He said that Aaron would be Moses' "prophet" (Exod. 7:1). Therefore as a prophet he was a spokesman, a mouth. The prophet of Jehovah then would be the mouth of Jehovah.

God said that when He should raise up a prophet, He would put his words in the prophet's mouth and that the prophet would speak them in His name (Deut. 18:9-22). The Hebrew prophet was an ambassador of Jehovah sent to make known the will and purpose of Jehovah to His chosen people (Amos 3:7, 8; Jer. 23:16; Ezek. 13:1-7). At other times as Jehovah's ambassador he was sent to the heathen; for example, Jonah was sent to Nineveh. As a spokesman for God he was more a "forth-teller" than a "fore-teller." To be sure, the prophet did foretell events, but this is not the basic meaning of the word.

Though "prophet" is the general term for God's spokesman used in the Old Covenant writings, other designations are used: Seer—this appears to have been the earliest term by which they were called (I Sam. 9:9); Man of God (I Sam. 9:6; I Kings 17:18); Servant of God (or, of Jehovah) (I Chron. 6:49; I Kings 18:36); Messenger of Jehovah (Isa. 42:19); and Watchman (Ezek. 3:17; 33:7). All these terms express the same fundamental idea—that of a mediator by speech between God and man.

From the prophets every preacher and teacher of the Word can learn. As Knudson has well expressed it:

There are two classes of preachers—the good preachers who have something to say, and the poor preachers who *have* to say something. But there is yet another and higher class. It consists of those who both have something to say and who have to say it. Such are the prophets.⁵

Jeremiah well represents this latter class as he explains his feelings: "And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain" (20:9). He had something to say and he had to say it.

The Pre-Literary (Oral) Prophets

1. Period of the Patriarchs: Founders of the Hebrew Nation

a. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. Abraham is recognized in Scripture as a prophet of God (Gen. 20:7, 17). Isaac and Jacob are

probably referred to in Psalm 105:15, which includes them in the roster of God's spokesmen.

b. Moses. It is only natural that, as God's instrument, the deliverer and lawgiver of the Hebrew nation should have been a prophet. He would not necessarily be included with the pre-literary prophets who followed, for he stands in a class by himself (cf. Deut. 18:15-18; 34:10; Hos. 12:13).

c. Miriam. She is spoken of as a "prophetess," and in some way was used of God to assist Moses in his work, probably as teacher (Exod. 15:20).

2. Period of the Judges

a. Deborah. Deborah was a female judge as well as a prophetess (Judg. 4:4). During this period there was also an unnamed prophet whom Jehovah sent to the people (6:8).

b. The prophetic bands, or "sons of the prophets." The earliest reference we have to these prophets is during the time of Samuel, in the eleventh century B.C. (I Sam. 10:5-13). A similar company is mentioned in I Samuel 19:18-24. After the time of Samuel it was two centuries before the prophetic bands came again into prominence, this time in connection with Elijah and Elisha (I Kings 18:13; 22:6). These prophetic bands were probably religious individuals gathered around an outstanding prophet to study under him and to imbibe his spirit.

c. The "prophet-judge": Samuel (I Sam. 1:1--25:1). During these days two parties appear to have arisen in Israel, one political and the other religious. Saul chose—if he did not head—the political party, whereas Samuel cast his influence with the religious element. Peter indicates that Samuel's work marks the beginning of the prophetic era (Acts 3:24).

3. Period of the Kings

a. From David to the division of the kingdom. The prophets were Nathan, who rebuked David (II Sam. 12:1ff.), prophesied of the Messiah (II Sam. 7:1-17), and anointed Solomon (I Kings 1); Gad, who rebuked David for having numbered Judah (II Sam. 24:11ff.); Ahijah, prophet to Jeroboam concerning the division of Judah and Israel (I Kings 11:29 ff.); Shemaiah, prophet to Rehoboam with instruction

not to go up and fight (I Kings 12:21-24); and an unnamed prophet, "a man of God" who was sent to Jeroboam to warn of the results of his apostasy (I Kings 13).

b. From the division of the monarchy to the time of Amos. There were Jehu, who declared the doom of Baasha (I Kings 16:1-7) and who rebuked Jehoshaphat for alliance with Ahab (II Chron. 19:1-3); Eliezer, who prophesied against Jehoshaphat, king of Judah (II Chron. 20:37); Micajah, who stood against the false prophet Zedekiah (I Kings 22:1-36); Jonah (of the early literary prophets, who wrote the Book of Jonah), advisor to Jeroboam II (II Kings 14:25); and Elijah and Elisha, who prophesied in the days of Ahab and the period that followed (I Kings 16 through II Kings 13).

False Prophets

Along with the true there arose also false prophets (see Deut. 18:20-22; Jer. 28). These flourished from a very early period in the nation's history to the time of the close of the Old Testament writings. The false prophets fall into the two general classes, mercenary and political; some prophesied for money, others for political favor (see Mic. 3:5, 11). Oftentimes the false prophets were nationalistic—that is, they defended the national practices and rulers through ignorance; but whether false through ignorance or self-will, they and their messages were no less severely denounced by the true prophets. Albert C. Knudson has well said: "An ignorant conscientiousness may be quite as dangerous to a community as deliberate wickedness." When opposed by false prophets, the true prophets rise to their greatest heights of zeal and fearlessness.

The Literary Prophets in Chronological Order

Bible scholars differ widely on the dates of the literary prophets, and the dates of some are difficult to determine. Because of this a list of eight or ten various authors is included. In the dates ascribed to the prophets as given

below, the first date is the one accepted in this study as the most probable.

In the first section, the "Ninth Century" prophets, the dates of the first two, Obadiah and Joel, are the most debatable. The problems faced and dealt with by these prophets are such as could fall into almost any period of the prophetic-era. The principles laid down are timeless. Obadiah is placed by some in the period of Jehoram, king of Judah, when the Philistines, the Arabians, and the Ethiopians came up against Judah (II Chron. 21:8-10, 16-18). This would place the book early, about 845 B.C. Others place the prophet in the period of the fall of Jerusalem or shortly thereafter, approximately 586 B.C. This study follows Keil and Sampey in suggesting the earlier date, although it does so with considerable question. The date for Joel is equally uncertain. By various scholars he is placed from 830 to 350 B.C. Here again the early dating by the more conservative scholars is accepted. Jonah appears in the early part of the eighth century, but is placed in the ninth-century group with Obadiah and Joel because he prophesied before the rise of the Assyrian Empire under Tiglath-pileser.

1. Ninth Century—Early Assyrian Period

(The list of authors is arranged alphabetically.)

- a. Obadiah, *ca.* 845 B.C. Davidson, uncertain; Driver, fifth century B.C.; Eiselein, after 586 B.C.; *I.S.B.E.* (Eiselein), 587 B.C.; Keil, *ca.* 845 B.C.; Knudson, *ca.* 460 B.C.; Pfeiffer, 460-400 B.C.; Sampey, *ca.* 845 B.C.; Young, before Jeremiah.
- b. Joel, *ca.* 830 B.C. Davidson, after the restoration; Driver, fifth century B.C.; Eiselein, 400 B.C.; *I.S.B.E.* (R), 900-400 B.C.; Keil, before Amos and Hosea, during the reign of Joash (837-803 B.C.); Knudson, *ca.* 400 B.C.; Pfeiffer, *ca.* 350 B.C.; Sampey, *ca.* 830 B.C.; Young, *ca.* 830 B.C., during the reign of Joash.
- c. Jonah, 790-750 B.C. Davidson, after restoration; Driver, fifth century B.C.; Eiselein, written 400-240 B.C., but Eiselein thinks the prophet lived *ca.* 770 B.C.; *I.S.B.E.*, 800-780 B.C.; Keil, early; Knudson, *ca.* 300 B.C.; Pfeiffer, *ca.* 350 B.C. or after; Sampey, *ca.* 800 B.C.; Young, 783-743 B.C.



2. Eighth Century—Assyrian Period

- a. Amos, 755 B.C. All the above-mentioned writers are agreed in placing Amos in the decade 760-750 B.C. This study will consider 755 B.C. as the date.
- b. Hosea, 750-725 B.C. The dates given by the above writers range from 786-734 B.C. From the internal evidence it appears that Hosea was later than Amos.
- c. Isaiah, 740-700 B.C. Except for liberal scholars who place chapters 40-66 during the period of the Babylonian captivity, all are agreed on the date for Isaiah.
- d. Micah, 735-700 B.C. With variations in their view as to when Micah began writing, all scholars consulted generally agree on this date.

3. Seventh Century—Chaldean Period

- a. Jeremiah, 626-586 B.C. The exact close of Jeremiah's ministry as prophet is uncertain, for he spent some years in Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem, 586 B.C. All give this as the date except C. von Orelli (*I.S.B.E.*) and Young, who place the call of Jeremiah to the prophetic office in the year 627 B.C.
- b. Zephaniah, 630-625 B.C. Davidson, 627 B.C. and after; Driver, before 621 B.C.; Eiselein, *ca.* 626 B.C.; *I.S.B.E.* (E), 630-626 B.C.; Young, early part of the reform of Josiah, and so generally do the others.
- c. Nahum, 625-612 B.C. The date of this prophecy lies somewhere between the fall of No-amon, 663 B.C., and the fall of Nineveh, 612 B.C. Older scholars placed the fall of Nineveh at 606 B.C., and considered the prophet's work to date just before that event. Recent scholarship has established the fall of Nineveh as 612 B.C.; thus, the most probable date for Nahum is 614-612 B.C. However, this study will favor the one given above, 625-612 B.C. as sufficiently inclusive to cover the period of the prophet.
- d. Habakkuk, 625-605 B.C. The Chaldean power began to rise in 625 B.C., and Jerusalem was brought under that power in 605 B.C.; so the prophet prophesied at some time between 625 and 605 B.C. Most scholars place him in this general period.

4. Sixth Century—the Exile

- a. Ezekiel, 593-570 B.C. Some place the beginning of his ministry in 592 B.C., and some set the conclusion of his work in 572 or 571 B.C. The difference is minor.
- b. Daniel, 605-536 B.C. Here there is great diversity of opinion. Davidson, late; Driver, late; Eiselein, 175-163 B.C.; *I.S.B.E.* (W), sixth century B.C.; Keil, Babylonian exile; Knudson, 165 B.C.; Pfeiffer, second century B.C.; Sampey, 605-536 B.C.; Young, sixth century B.C.

5. Sixth and Fifth Centuries—Post Exilic Period

- a. Haggai, 520 B.C. All scholars are agreed on this date.
- b. Zechariah, 520-518 B.C. Many scholars accept a later date for the latter part of the book, chapters 9-14; however, Farrar and others ascribe chapters 9-11 to the age of Isaiah before the fall of Samaria and chapters 12-14 to the time of Jeremiah before the fall of Jerusalem. Robinson thinks that chapters 1-8 record prophecies of the period 520-518 B.C. and that chapters 9-14 were spoken (and written) by the same prophet at a later time when, as an old man, he came forward to encourage his people during some Persian oppression.
- c. Malachi, *ca.* 440 B.C. Various dates are given, from 460-432 B.C. On the basis of internal evidence, it seems safe to ascribe the work of the prophet to a period after Ezra's death and before the end of Nehemiah's governorship. The absence of Nehemiah may have given rise to the abuses exposed by the prophet. This would place his work in the general period suggested above.

There are three things one should keep constantly in mind as he studies a work of the prophets:

First, it is necessary to understand the political, moral, social, and religious conditions at the time in which the prophet lived and preached, and how he proposed to meet these conditions. It will be observed that whatever the conditions, the prophet endeavored to meet them by pointing the people back to God. Before reform could be effected, their

Table of Dates for the Literary

Davidson Driver Eiselen

Prophets of Uncertain Dates

Obadiah	Uncertain	5th cent.	after 586
Joel	after res-toration	5th cent.	400
Jonah	after res-toration	5th cent.	400-250 ²

Eighth Century, or the Assyrian Period

Amos	760-750	760-746	755
Hosea	750-737	786-734	750-735
Isaiah	740-700	740-700	740-700
Micah	724-?	Con. Isa.	735-700

Seventh Century, or Chaldean Period

Jeremiah	626-586	626-	626-586
Zephaniah	626-?	bef. 621	ca. 626
Nahum	610-608	664-607	ca. 608
Habakkuk	605-600	bef. 600	ca. 600

Sixth Century, or the Exile

Ezekiel	593-573	592-570	593-570
Obadiah—see above.	late	late	175-163

Sixth and Fifth Centuries, or Post-Exilic Period

Haggai	520-	520-	520
Zech. 1-8	520	520-518	520
Zech. 9-14	late	458-432	aft. 350
Malachi	460-450	458-432	ca. 450

* All dates are BC.

¹ Eiselen gives a choice between an early date, ca. 845, and 587, about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.
² Eiselen says the book is the history of a prophet who lived ca. 770, but that it belonged to a composition between 400-250.

Prophets—Chronologically Arranged *

I.S.B.E. Knudson Pfeiffer Sampey Young

586 (E) ¹	ca. 460	460-400	ca. 845	before Jeremiah ca. 830
900-400(R)	ca. 400	ca. 350	ca. 830	
800-780(S)	ca. 300	ca. 350	ca. 800 ³	783-743

ca. 760(E)	ca. 750	ca. 750	ca. 750	
750-735(E)	743-734	750-744	ca. 750	
740-700(R)	740-	740-	738-700	
722-701(vO)	bef. 722	Con. Isa.	Con. Isa.	Con. Isa.

627-ff. ⁴	626-ff. ⁴	626-586	626-ff. ⁴	627-ff. ⁴
630-626(E)	ca. 627	630-624	630-625	
663-607(E)	ca. 607	bef. 612	ca. 630	663-612
ca. 600(E)	ca. 600	605-600	609-598	609-598

593-571(M)	592-570	593-571	593-571	
6th cent.(W)	165	2nd cent.	605-536	6th cent.

520(R)	520	520	520	520
520-518(R)	520 late	520-518 later	520-	520- same
445-432(R)	450	ca. 460	ca. 440	

³ Just prior to Jeroboam's accession to the throne of Israel (Ephraim).
⁴ Knudson, Sampey, and Young all carry the date of Jeremiah beyond the destruction of Jerusalem.

hearts must be changed toward Him. The thunder along with their lightning flashes is heard at this point in all who dealt with Israel's sins and her reaction to Jehovah.

A second point of observation should be what the prophets consider is God's relation to the heathen nations with whom the Jewish people came in contact. It should be noted that God directs the destiny of these and that it is He who judges them. One could ask if God exercises such rule today. The testimony of both Old and New Testaments is that He does.

A final point that the student should particularly regard is the prophet's teaching of a future kingdom and king to be fulfilled in one who was to come. Whatever was the lot of Israel and its king of the prophet's day, a lasting kingdom comprised of a spiritual Israel and a spiritual King who should rule in righteousness was the true hope of the future.

With these three points in mind, the student of the prophets will find himself richly repaid for his labors in reading, searching, and studying these giants of spiritual and moral power in ancient times.

Political Background from Elisha to Amos

Shortly after the death of Solomon (932/31 B.C.), the empire built by David divided into two kingdoms, Judah and Israel. The years that followed were filled with bitterness, war, and the introduction of idolatry. Solomon had opened the door for idolatry to enter the national life by building altars for the gods of his foreign wives (I Kings 11:4-8; Neh. 13:26). After his death idolatry eventually became more and more a part of the religious life of the people of Judah. In the northern kingdom Jeroboam introduced calf worship, making it the national religion of Israel (I Kings 12:25-33). Added to this system of perversion of Jehovah worship, Ahab and Jezebel introduced pure idolatry into Israel in the form of Baal worship. This departure from Jehovah by both nations led to all manner of political, social, and moral corruption. In His intense desire to turn the people back to Himself, Jehovah raised up prophets with the special mission of pointing

out to the people the contrast between their sins and His own holiness and the righteousness of His law. Although the prophetic era seems to have begun with Samuel (Acts 3:24), Elijah and Elisha stand out as the beginning of Jehovah's accelerated use of prophets in His effort to save His people from complete apostasy.

For further information on the background of conditions from the closing years of Elisha's career to the prophetic work of Amos, the reader should give careful attention to II Kings 8:1-15:7 and II Chronicles 21-26. In order that the reader may have before him a brief summary of the kings of Israel and Judah, the following list is given. Dates for the following material are based on Edwin R. Thiele's table, "The Dates of the Kings of Israel and Judah."

1. Israel

a. Jehu, 841-814/13 B.C. (II Kings 9:1-10:28; Athaliah and Joash, rulers in Judah). Jehu was anointed at Ramoth-Gilead by a son of the prophets who was sent by Elisha for this purpose (9:1-10). The house of Ahab was smitten and Jezebel was slain by Jehu as had been predicted by Elijah (9:11-36). Ahab's seventy sons were subsequently slain (10:1-17); the priests and worshippers of Baal were also put to death (10:18-28). The sin of Jehu was his worship of the calves set up by Jeroboam.

b. Jehoahaz, 814/13-798 B.C. (II Kings 13:1-9; twenty-third year of Joash, king of Judah). Jehoahaz began to deliver Israel into the hand of Syria; Jehoahaz called for help from Jehovah, who hearkened to him because of His pity for Israel. However, Jehoahaz and Israel "departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam," leading ultimately to the downfall of the nation.

c. Jehoash, 798-782/81 B.C. (II Kings 13:10-25; Joash, king of Judah). Jehoash came to Elisha as he lay upon his deathbed and was told to take arrows and shoot them from an open window. The prophet made no explanation except that the arrows were Jehovah's arrows of victory over Syria's arrow. Jehoash obeyed the instruction. He was then told to take arrows and smite upon the ground; he did this three times. The prophet was displeased because he had smitten the ground no more than three times, and he announced that

there would be only three victories over the Syrians. After the death of Elisha, Jehoash smote Syria three times, according to the prophecy of Elisha.

d. Jeroboam II, 793-753 B.C. (overlapping reign, 793/92-782/81 B.C.; II Kings 14:23-29; Amaziah, king of Judah). Jeroboam II restored the borders of Israel to the largest extent since the reign of Solomon. Jonah was the prophet of the period of his reign. Great prosperity was enjoyed under his leadership; but prosperity brought with it greed, corruption, and vices of many kinds. Toward the close of Jeroboam's reign, Amos began to prophesy.

2. Judah

a. Jehoram, 853-841 B.C., co-regent with Jehoshaphat, 853-848 B.C.; his independent reign, 848-841 B.C. (II Kings 8:16-24; II Chron. 21). As could be expected, Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat and husband of Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, was a wicked king. In his days Edom revolted. Jehoram made high places of idolatrous worship which led the people further into sin; for this he was rebuked by a letter from Elijah (II Chron. 21:11-15). The Philistines, Arabians, and Ethiopians were stirred up against him. According to the word of the prophet, he died of a terrible bowel disease. His character and the nature of his reign had been so revolting that the people were glad when he died.

b. Ahaziah, 841 B.C. (II Kings 8:25-29; II Chron. 22:1-9). Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram and Athaliah, walked in the way of Ahab, the idolatrous king of Israel. Death came within a year and cut short his reign.

c. Athaliah, 841-835 B.C. (II Kings 11; II Chron. 22:10-23:21). Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and usurper of the throne, slew all the royal seed except Joash. Rescued from the hands of Athaliah by a daughter of Jehoram and daughter of Ahaziah, the infant Joash escaped. After reigning six years, Athaliah was slain by the people in an insurrection led by Jehoiaada, the priest. Under Jehoiaada worship of Jehovah was restored. These were stirring times!

d. Joash, 835-796 B.C. (II Kings 12; II Chron. 24). Joash was seven years old when he began to reign. He did that which was right while Jehoiaada the priest lived, but upon the

death of Jehoiaada he became evil. He forsook Jehovah, restored the worship of the Asherim, and slew Zechariah, the son of Jehoiaada. During his reign the Syrians took away the treasures of the house of God. Joash was slain by his own servants.

e. Amaziah, 796-767 B.C. (II Kings 14; II Chron. 25). It is said that this king did right, but not with a perfect heart. He put down Edom and brought their gods to Jerusalem "and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them" (II Chron. 25:14, 15). He warred against Joash, king of Israel, but was defeated. Joash broke down the walls of Jerusalem and took the gold, silver, and other valuables to Samaria. Amaziah reigned fifteen years after that.

f. Uzziah, 767-740/39 B.C. (II Kings 15:1-7; II Chron. 26). Uzziah is also called Azariah. He was sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for fifty-one years. He is named as one of the good kings of Judah; he did that which was right. He put down the enemies of Judah, promoted husbandry, and brought great prosperity to the people. But in the midst of success he became proud and offered incense to Jehovah (a responsibility of the priests only); for this he was smitten with leprosy and lived a leper until the end of his life.

1 Frederick Carl Eiselen, *Prophecy and the Prophets*, p. 14.

2 C. von Orelli, "Prophecy," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, IV, p. 2459.

3 Robert Milligan, *Scheme of Redemption*, p. 298.

4 Albert C. Knudson, *Beacon Lights of Prophecy*, p. 30.

5 Albert C. Knudson, *The Prophetic Movement in Israel*, pp. 65 ff.

6 Knudson, p. 24.

7 Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, p. 205.

BOOKS OF PROPHECY AND DATES OF WRITING

837 JOEL	724 MICAH	592-570 EZEKIEL
787-746 JONAH	640 ZEPHANIAH	580-570 DANIEL
760 ISAIAH	630 NAHUM	520 ZECHARIAH
760 AMOS	612 HABAKKUK	520 HAGGAI
750 HOSEA	604 JEREMIAH	430 MALACHI
	586 OBADIAH	

EVENTS AND PROPHECIES SIDE BY SIDE

APPROX. DATE	PROPHETS	PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
837 B.C.	JOEL		
787-46	JONAH		
760	ISAIAH, AMOS	ISAIAH 51:11; 5:5,6; 14:1	
750	HOSEA		
724	MICAH	2 KGS. 20:16,17	
722	_____		CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL, 2 KGS. 25:8-11
640	ZEPHANIAH		
630	NAHUM		
612	HABAKKUK		
604	JEREMIAH	JEREMIAH 24:6; 25:11; 29:10; 30:18	
586	OBADIAH		JUDAH CARRIED INTO CAPTIVITY
592-570	EZEKIEL	EZEK. 36:24, 33,36	
580-570	DANIEL	ZEPH. 3:20	

APPROX.

DATE	PROPHETS	PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
536	_____		RETURN OF JEWS TO JERUSALEM, EZRA 1:1-3; 3:1 ff.
520		ZECHARIAH ISA. 44:28; 45:13; 61:4	
516	_____		TEMPLE REBUILT-EZRA 6:15; 2 Chron. 36:23; Zech. 6:13
458	_____		EZRA LEADS SECOND RETURN TO JERUSALEM.
445	_____		NEHEMIAH REBUILDS WALL OF JERUSALEM
430	MALACHI		

ORDER OF MATERIAL IN YOUR BOOK

1. Prophets and Groups
2. Introduction to the Minor Prophets
3. The Minor Prophets – Lesson One
4. Hosea
5. Joel
6. The Day of the Lord
7. Amos
8. Obadiah
9. Jonah
10. Micah
11. Nahum
12. Habakkuk
13. Zephaniah
14. Haggai
15. Zechariah
16. Malachi

Prophets may be divided into four groups –

1. The prophets of Israel: Jonah, Amos and Hosea
2. The prophets of Judah: Isaiah, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah and Habakkuk
3. The prophets of the captivity: Daniel, Obadiah, Ezekiel
4. The post exile prophets: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

Time of each one:

1. Jonah – 856-784 B.C.
2. Amos – 810-795 B.C.
3. Hosea – 810-725 B.C.
4. Isaiah – 810-689 B.C.
5. Joel – 697-660 B.C.
6. Micah – 758-699 B.C.
7. Nahum – 720-698 B.C.
8. Zephaniah – 640-609 B.C.
9. Jeremiah – 628-586 B.C.
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11. Daniel – 606-534 B.C.
12. Obadiah – 588-583 B.C.
13. Ezekiel – 583-562 B.C.
14. Haggai – 520-518 B.C.
15. Zechariah – 520-518 B.C.
16. Malachi – 436-420 B.C.

(The Gist of the Bible – Charles A. Shook, pages 302-314)

Willard Collins, Gospel Advocate, February 28, 1957, pages 133-134

Steps to Decline of Israel
LACK OF KNOWLEDGE
PRIDE
INSTABILITY
WORLDLYNESS
CORRUPTION
BACKSLIDING
IDOLATRY

A Chronological Tour of the Writing Prophets

Obadiah (844 BC)

A burden against Edom for joining strangers to loot Jerusalem (vv. 10-14).

Joel (830)

Invading Locusts and Assyrians, but hope for a day of renewal (2:28-32; cf. Acts 2:17-21).

Jonah (762)

A reluctant prophet goes to warn Nineveh and learn a lesson of God's love (4:1-3).

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A farmer prophet from Judah who spoke against the sins of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (2:6; 9:11).

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With deep personal involvement by the prophet, he speaks of the fall of Israel and its future Messianic restoration (3:1-5).

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Preached against the injustice of the rich toward the poor and of the place of heartfelt religion (6:6-8).

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The fall of Nineveh (1:12).

Zephaniah (632-627)

A prophet of royal birth who condemned the wickedness of Judah (1:7-8).

Jeremiah and Lamentations (627-582)

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A magnification of God's sovereignty. The captivity for Judah followed by a return, and a look into the future of Judah and the coming of the church (5:21).

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INTRODUCTION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS

I. WHY STUDY THE MINOR POPHETS?

- A. The Minor Prophets are rather small books tucked away at the end of the O.T., and people often know little about them.
- B. Some wonder if there is even any value in studying them.
- C. I maintain we should study them, and here's why.
 - 1. They are a part of "all Scripture" that is "inspired of God." (2 Tim. 3:16).
 - 2. All of them, with the exception of Obadiah and Nahum, are quoted or echoed in the N.T.
 - 3. They serve to help us understand the N.T., i.e., they furnish us with background information.
 - 4. They contain many lessons of eternal value—the righteousness of God, His dissatisfaction with barren ritual, His concern for the less fortunate, etc.
 - 5. In some cases, they point forward to the coming of the Christ and the Messianic Kingdom. (The "Church Fathers" primarily looked at them in this way.)
- D. I'm reminded of the truthfulness of Romans 15:4.

II. SOME BASIC CONSIDERATIONS THAT ARE IMPORTANT IN UNDERSTANDING ANY OF THE PROPHETS OR ANY OF THE BOOKS OF PROPHECY

- A. The prophets were people who spoke for another.
 - 1. They were not foretellers; they were "forth tellers." (Word literally means, "to boil up like a fountain.")
 - 2. Aaron was Moses' prophet (Exodus 4:10,16; 7:1).
 - 3. They were known by different terms that help understand their work.
 - a. The most common term is simply "prophet," *nabi*.
 - Occurs some 400 times in the O.T. as a noun, and verb forms are found another 110 times.
 - It has to do with "calling," and the debate is whether it is active or passive, i.e., whether the prophet is the one who is called by God or the one who does the calling on God's behalf. Both ideas would be correct.
 - b. He is also called a "seer" (1 Sam.9:9), and this is probably due to the fact they often received their messages through dreams, visions, etc. [Terms are used interchangeably in passages such as 2 Kings 17:13 and Micah 3:6-7).
 - c. He is also called a "man of God" (1 Kings 13:1).
 - d. He is called God's "messenger" (Isa. 42:19)

- e. He was assigned the role of “watchman” (Ezek. 3:17; 33:7).
- f. Prophets were also called simply “servants” (Amos 3:7; Jer. 7:25).
- B. It was through the prophets that God made His will known to the people (Heb. 1:1).
 - 1. Moses was the lawgiver (Neh. 8:1,14; 9:13-14; John 1:17; 7:19).
 - 2. Priests were administrators of the law and served before God on behalf of the people (Lev. 10:8-11; Hos. 4:6; Mal. 2:7).
 - 3. The wise men gave counsel (2 Sam. 14:1-24; 20:16-22).
 - 4. The psalmists were the poets, “sweet singers” (2 Sam. 23:1; 1 Chron. 6:33).
 - 5. The prophets were communicators of the Word of God.
- C. God guaranteed His message through the work of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).
- D. This means that the prophets did not introduce their own ideas or any new law. They simply spoke on God’s behalf, calling people back to God’s ways.
- E. The test of a prophet was whether what he said came to pass or not (Deut. 18:20-22).
- F. Much of what they said was conditional (Jer. 18:5-11). [Nineveh is a case in point. Repentance can cause God to do otherwise (cf. 1 Kings 21:29)].
- G. The prophets lived in tumultuous times. They lived before, during and immediately after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.
 - 1. The prophets did not deal with the remote and the abstract.
 - 2. Their messages were down-to-earth and spoke to the people where they were.
- H. God’s final revelation is made through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2). The N.T. writers often said, “This is that which was spoken by the prophets (cf. Acts 2:16; 3:24-26).

III. THE NAMES AND ARRANGEMENT OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

- A. Not all of the prophets were writing prophets.
 - 1. Though still called “prophets,” these early prophets did not leave behind any written collection of their oracles.
 - a. These prophets are generally called “The Early Prophets” or “Oral Prophets.”
 - b. They can be dated from ca. 1050-750 BC.
 - c. Names such as Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Nathan, Gad, etc. are on this list.
 - d. The prophets often traveled in bands or “schools” (1 Sam. 10:5,10; 19:20).
 - 2. It was not until the 8th century that collections were found.
- B. In the O.T., we have 17 books of prophecy.

1. Five of these are called “major prophets” simply because their books are longer—not more important.
2. Twelve of them are called “minor prophets” simply because their books are shorter—not less significant.
 - a. Augustine seems to be the first one to call them the “minor prophets.”
 - b. By the Hebrews, they were called “The Twelve Prophets,” or “The Book of the Twelve.”
- C. The arrangement is interesting, for they are not exactly in chronological order.
 1. Length and date do seem to fit into the order, however.
 2. The Assyrian Period prophets are placed first and the Persian Period prophets are placed last.
 3. Our English Bible follows the order of the Hebrew Bible.
- D. The style of these 12 books is different, too.
 1. Amos, Jonah and Hosea tell stories about the prophets themselves.
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 4. Malachi contains arguments between the prophet and the people.
 5. Habbakuk speaks to God; might even say he argued with God.
 6. Haggai clearly dates his oracles, while the others do not.

IV. THE TIMES OF THE PROPHETS

- A. As indicated, the prophets lived in difficult times, and they dealt primarily with the events of the day.
- B. It is important to fix some key dates in our minds.
 1. 721—The fall of Samaria to Assyria and the exile of the Northern Kingdom.
 2. 612—The fall of Nineveh to the Babylonians, Medes and Scythians.
 3. 606—The battle of Carchemish by which Babylon became the dominant power in the Middle East. Battle of Qarqar occurred in 853, and the Assyrian Period is usually marked from Qarqar to Chachemish.
 4. 597—The fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar.
 5. 586—The destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.
 6. 539—The beginning of the Persian Period.
 7. 536—The decree of Cyrus that allowed the return led by Zerubbabab to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.
 8. 520—The work of Haggai and Zechariah to stir up the people to resume the work on the temple.
 9. 516—The completion and dedication of the temple.
 10. 456—The return led by Ezra.
 11. 445—Nehemiah rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem.

Prophet	Date	Period	Period King	Audience	Audience King
Obadiah	845 BC	Early Assyrian	Shalmaneser III (859-824 BC)	Edom	unknown
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Micah	735-700 BC	Assyrian	Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BC)	Judah (Southern Kingdom)	Ahaz (735-715 BC), Hezekiah (730-686 BC)
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Haggai	520 BC	Persian (post-exilic)	Darius I (522-486 BC)	Judah (Southern Kingdom)	none
Zachariah	520-518 BC	Persian (post-exilic)	Darius I (522-486 BC)	Judah (Southern Kingdom)	none
Malachi	440 BC	Persian (post-exilic)	Artaxerxes I (464-423 BC)	Judah (Southern Kingdom)	none

Key events

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516 BC - completion and dedication of second temple
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The Minor Prophets: Little Books With a Big Message

CHAPTERS TO READ: Hos. 1—3; Joel 1, 2; Amos 3, 4; Obad. 1; Jon. 1, 3; Mic. 4, 5; Nahum 1, 3; Hab. 1, 2; Zeph. 1, 3; Hag. 1, 2; Zech. 7, 8; Mal. 1, 4.

THE MINOR PROPHETS

The last twelve books in the Old Testament are called "The Minor Prophets." In the Hebrew Bible, they were combined into one book. They are not called "minor" because they are unimportant; rather, as a rule, they are shorter than "The Major Prophets." Some of the books refer to rulers; it will help your understanding to review the spiritual situation at the times when those men ruled. Since some of the books are not dated, we cannot be dogmatic as to when they were written. Note, however, that all the dated books are arranged in chronological order. It does no harm to think of each undated book as being written in the general time frame between the previous dated book and the next dated book.

HOSEA

"Hosea" means "salvation" or "deliverance." Hosea worked for more than sixty years with the northern kingdom of Israel (7:5), starting with the reign of Jeroboam. He was a contemporary of Isaiah (1:7), who worked with the southern kingdom of Judah. Chaps. 1—3 are the key to the book. They tell of the unfaithfulness of Hosea's wife, Gomer, and her subsequent acceptance by Hosea. Gomer is typical of Israel; Hosea, typical of God. The message is that God loves His people even when they go away, and He longs for their return. Hos. 11:1 is quoted in Mt. 2:15.

JOEL

"Joel" means "Jehovah is God." Joel worked with the southern kingdom. He pictured a plague of locusts (probably, it literally came; see Amos 4:9). The locusts were symbolic of God's judgment. The figure of the locusts is reflected in the Book of Revelation (9:1-11). Joel 2:28-32 is quoted by Peter in Acts 2:16-21.

AMOS

"Amos" means "burden-bearer." As a life's work, he was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but a farmer (1:1; 7:14). In the days of Uzziah, king of

Judah, and Jeroboam, God called Amos from his home in the southern kingdom (1:1) and told him to go the northern kingdom to prophesy (7:15). He apparently went north (7:10, 13), spoke God's message of judgment against Israel, and then went home.

OBADIAH

"Obadiah" means "servant of Jehovah." This is the shortest book in the Old Testament. Obadiah's message is basically against the Edomites, the descendants of Esau (Gen. 25:30; 36:1). Throughout their history, the Israelites and the Edomites were hostile toward one another. The final blow was the action of the Edomites when Jerusalem was destroyed (vv. 10-14).

JONAH

"Jonah" means "dove." Jonah lived and worked in the northern kingdom in the days of Jeroboam (2 Kings 14:25). He followed the work of Elijah and Elisha in that area. God told him to preach to the city of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, which destroyed the northern kingdom a few years later. Jonah's experience in the great fish is a type of the resurrection of Christ (Mt. 12:39, 40).

MICAH

"Micah" means "Who is like Jehovah?" Micah lived in the southern kingdom and preached during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1). He was a contemporary of Isaiah. He is the only minor prophet who addressed his messages of judgment to both the northern kingdom, Israel, and the southern kingdom, Judah (1:5). He also looked ahead to the return from captivity (2:12, 13), the birth of Jesus (5:2), and the establishment of the church (4:1-4).

NAHUM

"Nahum" means "consolation" or "comforter." Nahum's message was one of consolation to the Jews, for one of their worst enemies, Assyria, was to be destroyed. He worked more than one hundred years after Jonah's preaching produced penitence in Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. By Nahum's day, God's patience had run out.

HABAKKUK

"Habakkuk" may mean "one who clings or embraces." Habakkuk's topic, the destruction of the Chaldeans (Babylonian Empire), is not unique, but his approach is. The first two chapters are a dialogue between Habakkuk and God on the problems of evil and suffering. The last chapter is a prayer-song that resolves the issue. The message is that God has a plan and purpose, so we must trust and believe in Him. Hab. 2:4 is quoted in Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, and Heb. 10:38.

ZEPHANIAH

"Zephaniah" means "Jehovah has guarded or hidden." Zephaniah worked during the reign of Josiah (1:1). He was a contemporary of Jeremiah. He not only described the fall of Judah; he also told of the fall of the surrounding nations. He embodied many of the prophecies of the Old Testament in one package.

HAGGAI

"Haggai" is an abbreviation of a Hebrew word that means "festival of Jehovah." Haggai encouraged the rebuilding of the temple following the Israelites' return from captivity, after Zerubbabel and Joshua had ceased to build.

ZECHARIAH

"Zechariah" means "remembered of Jehovah." Zechariah worked with Haggai in encouraging the rebuilding of the temple. Haggai dealt mainly with the present and with the immediate future as he urged the Israelites to build; Zechariah held out as encouragement the promise of a brighter tomorrow. His book contains a number of messianic prophecies, such as The Triumphal Entry (9:9, 10) and the betrayal (11:12, 13). The book contains more specific references to the crucifixion than any other Old Testament book except Psalms (note 12:10-12; 13:6, 7).

MALACHI

"Malachi" is an abbreviation of a Hebrew word that means "messenger of Jehovah." Malachi was probably a co-worker with Nehemiah; they dealt with the same problems: indifference in worship, indifference in marriage, etc. Malachi's prophecy about the coming of Elijah (4:5, 6), or John the Baptizer (see Mt. 11:7-14), ties the last book of the Old Testament with the first books of the New Testament.

THE BIG MESSAGE

God is God! We must take Him seriously. "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7).

When God's Children Get Bored (Malachi)

The spoiled child throws his toys down and pouts, "I'm bored!" The successful man sprawls in the middle of his prosperity and complains, "I'm bored!" The ungrateful child of God ignores his spiritual blessings and cries, "I'm bored, bored, *bored!*"

When the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity, they were too busy and had too many obstacles to overcome for them to be bored. Gradually those obstacles were removed: The temple was rebuilt; temple worship was resumed; the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt; Israel was re-established as a nation. Then, as life returned to normal, when the Israelites could have (and should have) rejoiced in all Jehovah had done for them, they became bored.

I. BORED WITH WORSHIP (1:6-14).

A. It was the same thing week after week: Pick out the best lamb, the best calf, or the best goat (Lev. 22:20-24; Deut. 15:21) and bring it to the priest to be sacrificed. "How tiresome! What a burden!" (v. 13; NASB; NIV). As a result, their worship had deteriorated into a half-hearted sham (vv. 7, 8).

B. The prophet's response:

1. "The problem is not with the worship arrangement. The problem is with *you*. It is a

problem of how you view God!" (v. 6).

2. If we cannot give God our best, it would be better to shut the doors of the church (v. 10)!

3. God never expects what we cannot give, but He does expect the best of what *we have*. He will not accept less (v. 14; cf. 2:13; 3:3, 4).

C. The lesson for us: If we are bored with worship, let us first look at *ourselves*. Each of us should ask, "What is my relationship with God? Why do I come to worship anyway? Do I 'fit God into my schedule'? Do I always give God my *best*?" (Note Jn. 4:23, 24.)

II. BORED WITH MARRIAGE (2:10-16).

A. Is this an abrupt break in thought? No. Their failure in worship was a failure to understand who God *is*. God is a God of *covenant* (vv. 4, 5, 8, 10; 3:1), a God who makes promises and keeps them! He expects His people to be a people of covenant and to keep their word. These people were not honoring their promises. Proof: They were not keeping the covenant of marriage.

1. Two things are mentioned: intermarriage with pagan women (v. 11; see also Ezra 9:1ff.) and divorcing the wives they had

married when they were young (vv. 14-16).

2. These problems probably went together: Bored with their Jewish wives, the men turned to exotic pagan women.

B. We can imagine their line of thought: "I'm *bored* with this marriage. All the fun has gone out of it. I'm not *happy*. Surely God wants me to be happy!" The prophet's reaction:

1. "God made both you and your wife; you should respect her [v. 10]! Instead, you are dealing *treacherously* with her" (v. 14).
2. "You are violating the second most important *covenant* one can make—second only to one's covenant with God" (v. 14).
3. The purpose of marriage is not to scratch you where you itch, but to produce godly offspring (v. 15), i.e., children who love and obey God.

4. *God hates divorce* (v. 16)!

C. This message is needed today (Mt. 19:3-9)!

III. BORED WITH GIVING (3:7-12).

A. This may seem to be an anti-climax, but one way to tell if our relationship with God and others is going sour is to look at our giving. When God challenged His children to repent, they, in effect, said, "We have nothing to repent of." God answered, "Let Me give you a vivid example of what you need to repent of: You have been *robbing* Me!" (3:7, 8).

1. Tithes, or 10 percent (Lev. 27:30-33; Num. 18:21-32; Deut. 12:17, 18; 14:28, 29).

2. Offerings, including annual contributions in addition to the tithes (Deut. 12:6, 11, 17).

B. Again we can imagine the people's reasoning: "I get so *tired* of hearing of money, money, money! Do they not realize the economy is bad (vv. 11, 14)? How can I maintain my house, my chariots, my slaves, my valuable collection of mint-condition shekels if I keep giving?" The prophet's response:

1. Failure to give indicates failure to recognize the source of one's blessings and failure to understand that God owns everything (v. 8).
2. Failure to give as one should is worse than robbing a bank; it is robbing *God* (v. 8).
3. The reason we have financial problems may be that we do not trust the Lord enough to give properly (vv. 9-12; note 2 Chron. 31:10).

C. God does not bind the tithe in the New Testament, but He has commanded us to give liberally (2 Cor. 9:6, 7; 1 Cor. 16:2). If we do, He has promised to bless us (Lk. 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:10).

CONCLUSION

I remember Grandma's response when we said, "I'm bored." She would tell us, "You get *out* of something what you *put in*." Malachi says essentially the same thing to those who have said it is vain to serve God: "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name. 'And they will be Mine,' says the Lord of hosts, 'on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.' So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him" (3:16-18).

The Minor Prophets

The twelve books that comprise this prophetic anthology differ considerably in substance and style. Some contain elements of biography that supplement the prophetic preaching with some insight concerning the preacher (Amos, Hosea). Others remain for practical purposes anonymous, despite the names attached to them (Obadiah, Malachi). They range in date from periods separated by more than three centuries (from about 750 B.C. to 400 B.C.). They reflect different geographical locations, some reflecting life in the ancient monarchical states of Israel and Judah, others pertaining to the period after the Exile. But for all the differences between them, the books share common ground. All are concerned with prophecy, namely the declaration of God's word to the people of God. And taken together, the Twelve Prophets provide us with a panorama of Israel's religion during one of the most critical periods of its history. From the false confidence of the time of the monarchy, to the despair of those in exile, and finally to the new hopes and aspirations following exile, we are provided with an understanding of the transition from an old state-religion to the birth-pains of a newly formed community of God's people.

A century or so after the completion of the Book of the Twelve Prophets, Joshua ben Sira wrote his famous wisdom work, in which he extolled the fame of Israel's past heroes. His words concerning the Twelve Prophets indicate not only their greatness in bygone years, but also their potential contribution to the future: "May the bones of the twelve prophets also send forth new life from the ground where they lie! For they put new heart into Jacob (Israel) and rescued the people by their confident hope" (Ecclesiasticus 49:10).

Twelve Prophets
Peter C. Craigie

Minor Prophets

The prophets occupy a surprisingly large part of the Old Testament, especially when placed against our estimation of those books. Yet, their confusing, repetitious, and alien speeches contain the lessons that God wanted His people to understand; messages that are as valuable today as they were when they were first spoken.

So, what about the Minor Prophets, these little messages from God?

Seeing the little messages for the first time

- They might be little, but they are not minor, c.f. Hosea 6:6, Matthew 9:13;12:7; 23:23, Matthew 7:12
- The prophets spoke God's will to men, c.f. Hebrews 1:1, Amos 3:7
- God guaranteed the messages of the prophets, 2 Peter 1:20,21, Deuteronomy 18:20-22
- Much of what the prophets said were conditional, c.f. Jonah, Jeremiah 18:1-10
- The prophets spoke in times stressed by political, social, economic, and cultural conflicts
- The messages of the prophets were always practical applications of a relationship with God and its expressions in the lives of the people around those being addressed, c.f. Hosea 4:1-3;10:12;12:6
- The Minor Prophets have much to say about Jesus, cf. Micah 4:1-8; 7:14,15
- All of the Minor Prophets, except for Obadiah and Nahum, are quoted in the New Testament.

Some Big Messages in these little messages

- God is Holy, Habakkuk 2:13, Hosea 14:9
- God is sovereign, Nahum 1:2,3, Joel 2:25-27, Micah 6:5
- The place of the heart is emphasized again and again, Joel 2:13, Hosea 6:3, Micah 6:6-8
- Hypocritical worship and lifestyles are never accepted, Amos 5:21-24, Hosea 6:6, Malachi 1:11-14; 2:13,14
- Sin is unbelievably ugly, Amos 1:2-2:8, Hosea 4:1,2
- Righteousness is in how we treat others, Micah 6:8, Amos 5:12-15
- Faithfulness and loyalty are necessary in a relationship with God, Micah 7:18, Hosea 6:4, Habakkuk 2:4
- God is merciful, Joel 2:13, Hosea 6:1,2, Jonah 4:9-11
- God's desire is to save people, Amos 5:14,15, Micah 7:18,19

Learning from these little messages

- How seriously do **we** take our relationship with God?
- How faithful are **we** to God's laws *and* attitudes?
- Do **we** understand and believe that sin is a serious and deadly problem?
- Christians are often called hypocrites; what can be said about **us**?
- God has been merciful, loving, kind, and patient with us; how do **we** treat others?
- God wants us accept His offer of salvation; we should be willing to give **everything** up in favor of that offer

Lets take the messages of the Minor Prophets and apply them to our lives - this is what life is all about!

INTRODUCTION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS

I. WHY STUDY THE MINOR PROPHETS?

- A. The Minor Prophets are rather small books tucked away at the end of the O.T., and people often know little about them.
- B. Some wonder if there is even any value in studying them.
- C. I maintain we should study them, and here's why.
 - 1. They are a part of "all Scripture" that is "inspired of God." (2 Tim. 3:16).
 - 2. All of them, with the exception of Obadiah and Nahum, are quoted or echoed in the N.T.
 - 3. They serve to help us understand the N.T., i.e., they furnish us with background information.
 - 4. They contain many lessons of eternal value—the righteousness of God, His dissatisfaction with barren ritual, His concern for the less fortunate, etc.
 - 5. In some cases, they point forward to the coming of the Christ and the Messianic Kingdom. (The "Church Fathers" primarily looked at them in this way.)
- D. I'm reminded of the truthfulness of Romans 15:4.

II. SOME BASIC CONSIDERATIONS THAT ARE IMPORTANT IN UNDERSTANDING ANY OF THE PROPHETS OR ANY OF THE BOOKS OF PROPHECY

- A. The prophets were people who spoke for another.
 - 1. They were not foretellers; they were "forth tellers." (Word literally means, "to boil up like a fountain.")
 - 2. Aaron was Moses' prophet (Exodus 4:10,16; 7:1).
 - 3. They were known by different terms that help understand their work.
 - a. The most common term is simply "prophet," *nabi*.
 - Occurs some 400 times in the O.T. as a noun, and verb forms are found another 110 times.
 - It has to do with "calling," and the debate is whether it is active or passive, i.e., whether the prophet is the one who is called by God or the one who does the calling on God's behalf. Both ideas would be correct.
 - b. He is also called a "seer" (1 Sam.9:9), and this is probably due to the fact they often received their messages through dreams, visions, etc. [Terms are used interchangeably in passages such as 2 Kings 17:13 and Micah 3:6-7).
 - c. He is also called a "man of God" (1 Kings 13:1).
 - d. He is called God's "messenger" (Isa. 42:19)

- e. He was assigned the role of “watchman” (Ezek. 3:17; 33:7).
 - f. Prophets were also called simply “servants” (Amos 3:7; Jer. 7:25).
- B. It was through the prophets that God made His will known to the people (Heb. 1:1).
 - 1. Moses was the lawgiver (Neh. 8:1,14; 9:13-14; John 1:17; 7:19).
 - 2. Priests were administrators of the law and served before God on behalf of the people (Lev. 10:8-11; Hos. 4:6; Mal. 2:7).
 - 3. The wise men gave counsel (2 Sam. 14:1-24; 20:16-22).
 - 4. The psalmists were the poets, “sweet singers” (2 Sam. 23:1; 1 Chron. 6:33).
 - 5. The prophets were communicators of the Word of God.
- C. God guaranteed His message through the work of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).
- D. This means that the prophets did not introduce their own ideas or any new law. They simply spoke on God’s behalf, calling people back to God’s ways.
- E. The test of a prophet was whether what he said came to pass or not (Deut. 18:20-22).
- F. Much of what they said was conditional (Jer. 18:5-11). [Nineveh is a case in point. Repentance can cause God to do otherwise (cf. 1 Kings 21:29)].
- G. The prophets lived in tumultuous times. They lived before, during and immediately after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.
 - 1. The prophets did not deal with the remote and the abstract.
 - 2. Their messages were down-to-earth and spoke to the people where they were.
- H. God’s final revelation is made through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2). The N.T. writers often said, “This is that which was spoken by the prophets (cf. Acts 2:16; 3:24-26).

III. THE NAMES AND ARRANGEMENT OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

- A. Not all of the prophets were writing prophets.
 - 1. Though still called “prophets,” these early prophets did not leave behind any written collection of their oracles.
 - a. These prophets are generally called “The Early Prophets” or “Oral Prophets.”
 - b. They can be dated from ca. 1050-750 BC.
 - c. Names such as Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Nathan, Gad, etc. are on this list.
 - d. The prophets often traveled in bands or “schools” (1 Sam. 10:5,10; 19:20).
 - 2. It was not until the 8th century that collections were found.
- B. In the O.T., we have 17 books of prophecy.

1. Five of these are called “major prophets” simply because their books are longer—not more important.
2. Twelve of them are called “minor prophets” simply because their books are shorter—not less significant.
 - a. Augustine seems to be the first one to call them the “minor prophets.”
 - b. By the Hebrews, they were called “The Twelve Prophets,” or “The Book of the Twelve.”
- C. The arrangement is interesting, for they are not exactly in chronological order.
 1. Length and date do seem to fit into the order, however.
 2. The Assyrian Period prophets are placed first and the Persian Period prophets are placed last.
 3. Our English Bible follows the order of the Hebrew Bible.
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445 BC - Nehemiah rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem

The Minor Prophets: Little Books With a Big Message

CHAPTERS TO READ: Hos. 1—3; Joel 1, 2; Amos 3, 4; Obad. 1; Jon. 1, 3; Mic. 4, 5; Nahum 1, 3; Hab. 1, 2; Zeph. 1, 3; Hag. 1, 2; Zech. 7, 8; Mal. 1, 4.

THE MINOR PROPHETS

The last twelve books in the Old Testament are called "The Minor Prophets." In the Hebrew Bible, they were combined into one book. They are not called "minor" because they are unimportant; rather, as a rule, they are shorter than "The Major Prophets." Some of the books refer to rulers; it will help your understanding to review the spiritual situation at the times when those men ruled. Since some of the books are not dated, we cannot be dogmatic as to when they were written. Note, however, that all the dated books are arranged in chronological order. It does no harm to think of each undated book as being written in the general time frame between the previous dated book and the next dated book.

HOSEA

"Hosea" means "salvation" or "deliverance." Hosea worked for more than sixty years with the northern kingdom of Israel (7:5), starting with the reign of Jeroboam. He was a contemporary of Isaiah (1:7), who worked with the southern kingdom of Judah. Chaps. 1—3 are the key to the book. They tell of the unfaithfulness of Hosea's wife, Gomer, and her subsequent acceptance by Hosea. Gomer is typical of Israel; Hosea, typical of God. The message is that God loves His people even when they go away, and He longs for their return. Hos. 11:1 is quoted in Mt. 2:15.

JOEL

"Joel" means "Jehovah is God." Joel worked with the southern kingdom. He pictured a plague of locusts (probably, it literally came; see Amos 4:9). The locusts were symbolic of God's judgment. The figure of the locusts is reflected in the Book of Revelation (9:1-11). Joel 2:28-32 is quoted by Peter in Acts 2:16-21.

AMOS

"Amos" means "burden-bearer." As a life's work, he was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but a farmer (1:1; 7:14). In the days of Uzziah, king of

Judah, and Jeroboam, God called Amos from his home in the southern kingdom (1:1) and told him to go the northern kingdom to prophesy (7:15). He apparently went north (7:10, 13), spoke God's message of judgment against Israel, and then went home.

OBADIAH

"Obadiah" means "servant of Jehovah." This is the shortest book in the Old Testament. Obadiah's message is basically against the Edomites, the descendants of Esau (Gen. 25:30; 36:1). Throughout their history, the Israelites and the Edomites were hostile toward one another. The final blow was the action of the Edomites when Jerusalem was destroyed (vv. 10-14).

JONAH

"Jonah" means "dove." Jonah lived and worked in the northern kingdom in the days of Jeroboam (2 Kings 14:25). He followed the work of Elijah and Elisha in that area. God told him to preach to the city of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, which destroyed the northern kingdom a few years later. Jonah's experience in the great fish is a type of the resurrection of Christ (Mt. 12:39, 40).

MICAH

"Micah" means "Who is like Jehovah?" Micah lived in the southern kingdom and preached during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1). He was a contemporary of Isaiah. He is the only minor prophet who addressed his messages of judgment to both the northern kingdom, Israel, and the southern kingdom, Judah (1:5). He also looked ahead to the return from captivity (2:12, 13), the birth of Jesus (5:2), and the establishment of the church (4:1-4).

NAHUM

"Nahum" means "consolation" or "comforter." Nahum's message was one of consolation to the Jews, for one of their worst enemies, Assyria, was to be destroyed. He worked more than one hundred years after Jonah's preaching produced penitence in Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. By Nahum's day, God's patience had run out.

HABAKKUK

"Habakkuk" may mean "one who clings or embraces." Habakkuk's topic, the destruction of the Chaldeans (Babylonian Empire), is not unique, but his approach is. The first two chapters are a dialogue between Habakkuk and God on the problems of evil and suffering. The last chapter is a prayer-song that resolves the issue. The message is that God has a plan and purpose, so we must trust and believe in Him. Hab. 2:4 is quoted in Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, and Heb. 10:38.

ZEPHANIAH

"Zephaniah" means "Jehovah has guarded or hidden." Zephaniah worked during the reign of Josiah (1:1). He was a contemporary of Jeremiah. He not only described the fall of Judah; he also told of the fall of the surrounding nations. He embodied many of the prophecies of the Old Testament in one package.

HAGGAI

"Haggai" is an abbreviation of a Hebrew word that means "festival of Jehovah." Haggai encouraged the rebuilding of the temple following the Israelites' return from captivity, after Zerubbabel and Joshua had ceased to build.

ZECHARIAH

"Zechariah" means "remembered of Jehovah." Zechariah worked with Haggai in encouraging the rebuilding of the temple. Haggai dealt mainly with the present and with the immediate future as he urged the Israelites to build; Zechariah held out as encouragement the promise of a brighter tomorrow. His book contains a number of messianic prophecies, such as The Triumphal Entry (9:9, 10) and the betrayal (11:12, 13). The book contains more specific references to the crucifixion than any other Old Testament book except Psalms (note 12:10-12; 13:6, 7).

MALACHI

"Malachi" is an abbreviation of a Hebrew word that means "messenger of Jehovah." Malachi was probably a co-worker with Nehemiah; they dealt with the same problems: indifference in worship, indifference in marriage, etc. Malachi's prophecy about the coming of Elijah (4:5, 6), or John the Baptizer (see Mt. 11:7-14), ties the last book of the Old Testament with the first books of the New Testament.

THE BIG MESSAGE

God is God! We must take Him seriously. "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7).

When God's Children Get Bored (Malachi)

The spoiled child throws his toys down and pouts, "I'm bored!" The successful man sprawls in the middle of his prosperity and complains, "I'm bored!" The ungrateful child of God ignores his spiritual blessings and cries, "I'm bored, bored, bored!"

When the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity, they were too busy and had too many obstacles to overcome for them to be bored. Gradually those obstacles were removed: The temple was rebuilt; temple worship was resumed; the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt; Israel was re-established as a nation. Then, as life returned to normal, when the Israelites could have (and should have) rejoiced in all Jehovah had done for them, they became bored.

I. BORED WITH WORSHIP (1:6-14).

- A. It was the same thing week after week: Pick out the best lamb, the best calf, or the best goat (Lev. 22:20-24; Deut. 15:21) and bring it to the priest to be sacrificed. "How tiresome! What a burden!" (v. 13; NASB; NIV). As a result, their worship had deteriorated into a half-hearted sham (vv. 7, 8).
- B. The prophet's response:
 1. "The problem is not with the worship arrangement. The problem is with *you*. It is a

problem of how you view God!" (v. 6).

2. If we cannot give God our best, it would be better to shut the doors of the church (v. 10)!
3. God never expects what we cannot give, but He does expect the best of what we *have*. He will not accept less (v. 14; cf. 2:13; 3:3, 4).
- C. The lesson for us: If we are bored with worship, let us first look at *ourselves*. Each of us should ask, "What is my relationship with God? Why do I come to worship anyway? Do I 'fit God into my schedule'? Do I always give God my *best*?" (Note Jn. 4:23, 24.)

II. BORED WITH MARRIAGE (2:10-16).

- A. Is this an abrupt break in thought? No. Their failure in worship was a failure to understand who God *is*. God is a God of *covenant* (vv. 4, 5, 8, 10; 3:1), a God who makes promises and keeps them! He expects His people to be a people of covenant and to keep their word. These people were not honoring their promises. Proof: They were not keeping the covenant of marriage.
 1. Two things are mentioned: intermarriage with pagan women (v. 11; see also Ezra 9:1ff.) and divorcing the wives they had

married when they were young (vv. 14-16).

2. These problems probably went together:
Bored with their Jewish wives, the men turned to exotic pagan women.

B. We can imagine their line of thought: "I'm *bored* with this marriage. All the fun has gone out of it. I'm not *happy*. Surely God wants me to be happy!" The prophet's reaction:

1. "God made both you and your wife; you should respect her [v. 10]! Instead, you are dealing *treacherously* with her" (v. 14).
2. "You are violating the second most important *covenant* one can make—second only to one's covenant with God" (v. 14).
3. The purpose of marriage is not to scratch you where you itch, but to produce godly offspring (v. 15), i.e., children who love and obey God.
4. *God hates divorce* (v. 16)!

C. This message is needed today (Mt. 19:3-9)!

III. BORED WITH GIVING (3:7-12).

A. This may seem to be an anti-climax, but one way to tell if our relationship with God and others is going sour is to look at our giving. When God challenged His children to repent, they, in effect, said, "We have nothing to repent of." God answered, "Let Me give you a vivid example of what you need to repent of: You have been *robbing Me!*" (3:7, 8).

1. Tithes, or 10 percent (Lev. 27:30-33; Num. 18:21-32; Deut. 12:17, 18; 14:28, 29).
2. Offerings, including annual contributions in addition to the tithes (Deut. 12:6, 11, 17).

B. Again we can imagine the people's reasoning: "I get so *tired* of hearing of money, money, money! Do they not realize the economy is bad (vv. 11, 14)? How can I maintain my house, my chariots, my slaves, my valuable collection of mint-condition shekels if I keep giving?" The prophet's response:

1. Failure to give indicates failure to recognize the source of one's blessings and failure to understand that God owns everything (v. 8).
2. Failure to give as one should is worse than robbing a bank; it is robbing *God* (v. 8).
3. The reason we have financial problems may be that we do not trust the Lord enough to give properly (vv. 9-12; note 2 Chron. 31:10).

C. God does not bind the tithe in the New Testament, but He has commanded us to give liberally (2 Cor. 9:6, 7; 1 Cor. 16:2). If we do, He has promised to bless us (Lk. 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:10).

CONCLUSION

I remember Grandma's response when we said, "I'm bored." She would tell us, "You get *out* of something what you *put in*." Malachi says essentially the same thing to those who have said it is vain to serve God: "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name. 'And they will be Mine,' says the Lord of hosts, 'on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.' So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him" (3:16-18).

The Minor Prophets

The twelve books that comprise this prophetic anthology differ considerably in substance and style. Some contain elements of biography that supplement the prophetic preaching with some insight concerning the preacher (Amos, Hosea). Others remain for practical purposes anonymous, despite the names attached to them (Obadiah, Malachi). They range in date from periods separated by more than three centuries (from about 750 B.C. to 400 B.C.). They reflect different geographical locations, some reflecting life in the ancient monarchical states of Israel and Judah, others pertaining to the period after the Exile. But for all the differences between them, the books share common ground. All are concerned with prophecy, namely the declaration of God's word to the people of God. And taken together, the Twelve Prophets provide us with a panorama of Israel's religion during one of the most critical periods of its history. From the false confidence of the time of the monarchy, to the despair of those in exile, and finally to the new hopes and aspirations following exile, we are provided with an understanding of the transition from an old state-religion to the birth-pains of a newly formed community of God's people.

A century or so after the completion of the Book of the Twelve Prophets, Joshua ben Sira wrote his famous wisdom work, in which he extolled the fame of Israel's past heroes. His words concerning the Twelve Prophets indicate not only their greatness in bygone years, but also their potential contribution to the future: "May the bones of the twelve prophets also send forth new life from the ground where they lie! For they put new heart into Jacob (Israel) and rescued the people by their confident hope" (Ecclesiasticus 49:10).

Twelve Prophets
Peter C. Craigie

Minor Prophets

The prophets occupy a surprisingly large part of the Old Testament, especially when placed against our estimation of those books. Yet, their confusing, repetitious, and alien speeches contain the lessons that God wanted His people to understand; messages that are as valuable today as they were when they were first spoken.

So, what about the Minor Prophets, these little messages from God?

Seeing the little messages for the first time

- They might be little, but they are not minor, c.f. Hosea 6:6, Matthew 9:13;12:7; 23:23, Matthew 7:12
- The prophets spoke God's will to men, c.f. Hebrews 1:1, Amos 3:7
- God guaranteed the messages of the prophets, 2 Peter 1:20,21, Deuteronomy 18:20-22
- Much of what the prophets said were conditional, c.f. Jonah, Jeremiah 18:1-10
- The prophets spoke in times stressed by political, social, economic, and cultural conflicts
- The messages of the prophets were always practical applications of a relationship with God and its expressions in the lives of the people around those being addressed, c.f. Hosea 4:1-3;10:12;12:6
- The Minor Prophets have much to say about Jesus, cf. Micah 4:1-8; 7:14,15
- All of the Minor Prophets, except for Obadiah and Nahum, are quoted in the New Testament.

Some Big Messages in these little messages

- God is Holy, Habakkuk 2:13, Hosea 14:9
- God is sovereign, Nahum 1:2,3, Joel 2:25-27, Micah 6:5
- The place of the heart is emphasized again and again, Joel 2:13, Hosea 6:3, Micah 6:6-8
- Hypocritical worship and lifestyles are never accepted, Amos 5:21-24, Hosea 6:6, Malachi 1:11-14; 2:13,14
- Sin is unbelievably ugly, Amos 1:2-2:8, Hosea 4:1,2
- Righteousness is in how we treat others, Micah 6:8, Amos 5:12-15
- Faithfulness and loyalty are necessary in a relationship with God, Micah 7:18, Hosea 6:4, Habakkuk 2:4
- God is merciful, Joel 2:13, Hosea 6:1,2, Jonah 4:9-11
- God's desire is to save people, Amos 5:14,15, Micah 7:18,19

Learning from these little messages

- How seriously do **we** take our relationship with God?
 - How faithful are **we** to God's laws *and* attitudes?
 - Do **we** understand and believe that sin is a serious and deadly problem?
 - Christians are often called hypocrites; what can be said about **us**?
 - God has been merciful, loving, kind, and patient with us; how do **we** treat others?
 - God wants us accept His offer of salvation; we should be willing to give **everything** up in favor of that offer
-

Lets take the messages of the Minor Prophets and apply them to our lives - this is what life is all about!

THE MINOR PROPHETS

Lesson One

INTRODUCTION:

1. How much do you know about the minor prophets? In fact, how much do you know about the Old Testament?
2. It is true that we are no longer living under the Old Testament (Col. 2:12) but "the things written aforetime were written for our learning." (Rom. 15:4). What happened to God's people in times past and how God dealt with them still serves as essential examples for us today. (1 Cor. 10:6, 11).
3. Many so-called "prophetic writers and speakers" of our day read into the prophets everything from "tire rationing" to "hydrogen bombs" and as a result fail to see and understand the vital messages of our day.
4. Since all of the minor prophets are quoted or echoed in the New Testament, except Obadiah & Nahum, it is urgent that we study them.
5. "These lessons, however, are built upon the assumption that the prophets first had a message revelant to the moral and religious situation of their own day. It is the duty of the expositor to try first to set forth that message. But of what value, other than to satisfy curiosity, can such a message be? White it is granted that times have changed and new gadgets have become abundant, it is denied that the basic issues of life are different today from those of the days of the prophets. Men still trust in material strength and delight in wealth and luxury while they forget God. There is nothing particularly new about lying, killing, stealing and committing adultery. Oppression and injustice are rampant. Men still tend to heed the speaker who presents the pleasant message and assure them that their deeds are satisfactory. Men prefer to make amends by sacrifice rather than to do right. The prophets, properly interpreted, speak to these issues as though they were among us today, presenting their thoughts in unforgettable figures of speech. The prophets insist that God - rather than economics or politics - is the final arbiter of history. Their message will never be out of date." (The Minor Prophets, Jack Lewis, p. 8).
6. "All of the minor prophets were concerned with the sin and iniquity of their day, and even though today the devil has gone out of fashion, he has not gone out of business; therefore, these prophets have vital messages for us." (Ellis, G. A., March 22, 1951, p. 179).

DISCUSSION:

I. SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING THE PROPHETS.

- A. A prophet was a man that spoke and was moved by the spirit of God. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. 1:20,21).
- B. "The prophet cannot introduce strange religions." (Lewis) "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage to thrust thee out of the way which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee." (Deut. 13:1-5) He had the responsibility of calling men back to the law of Moses, not introducing new laws.

- 14 C. "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." (Deut. 18:20-22). These verses reveal that a true prophet was a man whose saying came to pass.
- D. The prophecies of the Bible are conditional. "Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good." (Jer. 18:5-11). If it was a threat of punishment, then it could be delayed by repentance.
- E. These prophets lived before and immediately after the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles. The threats of destruction they made are most fulfilled in these events, just as the returns mentioned are fulfilled. (Zech. 1:5,6).
- F. Some of the prophecies of the Old Testament deal with Christ and the church (Acts 3:24-26; 1 Pet. 1:10-12) Christ is God's last prophet. Heb. 1:1,2

II. PROPHETS, PROPHECY AND THEIR PLACE IN GOD'S PLAN.

- 9 A. A prophet can well be defined as one who speaks for another. (Ex. 4:10-16; 7:1)
1. God spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets. Heb. 1:1,2
 2. The prophet was called by various names. But prophet (Nabi) occurs about 400 times in the "Old Testament as a noun and a verb from the same root occurs 110 times.
 3. A prophet was called of God and proclaimed God's message.
- B. "Prophecy is clearly distinguished in Scripture from magic, soothsaying, divining, augury, etc...." (Deut. 18).

III. THE TIMES OF THE PROPHETS AND THEIR CLASSIFICATIONS.

- 11 A. The period into which the prophets fit in history are covered by 2 Kings 14:23ff; 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Nehemiah, and Ezra.
- B. Bro. Jack Lewis, in his book "The Minor Prophets" gives a chart of events and the place of the minor prophets:
1. Events:
 - 721 B.C. The fall of Samaria to Assyria and the exile of the Northern Kingdom
 - 612 B.C. The fall of Nineveh to the onslaught of Babylonians, Medes, Scythians
 - 606 B.C. The battle of Carchemish by which Babylon became dominant in the Middle East.
 - 597 B.C. The fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar and the exile of King Jehoiachin.
 - 586 B.C. The destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 539 B.C. The beginning of the Persian period.
 - 536 B.C. The decree of Cyrus permitting the return from exile and the reconstruction of the temple. The return led by Zerubbabel.

520 B.C. The work of Haggai and Zechariah to stir up the people to resume work on the temple.

516 B.C. The completion and dedication of the second temple.

457 B.C. The return led by Ezra.

445 B.C. Nehemiah rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem.

2. The place of the prophets by periods.

ASSYRIAN PERIOD

8th - 7th Century B.C.

BABYLONIAN PERIOD

7th Century B.C.

PERSIAN PERIOD or
Post-Exile Prophets.

12
Jonah

Amos (Primarily to
Hosea) Northern Kingdom)

13
Micah

Zephaniah

Nahum

Habakkuk

Haggai

Zechariah

Malachi

Joel and Obadiah are not listed here because the date of their prophecy is uncertain.

- C. Augustine first referred to "The Minor Prophets." They are not such because what they had to say is any less important, but their books are shorter in most cases.

QUESTIONS

Lesson One

DISCUSSION & THOUGHT QUESTIONS.

1. Why are the last twelve books of the Old Testament referred to as the minor prophets?

The length are less than the major prophets

2. What value is there in studying these Old Testament books? (cf. Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6,11)

We learn from them lessons

3. Which two of the minor prophets are not quoted or echoed in the New Testament?

Obadiah + Nahum

4. The prophets first had a message revelant to what time? *The time in*

which they lived

5. It is granted that times have changed and new gadgets are here, but what is the same

5 today as in the days of the prophets? *Principles are the same*

- 6* 6. Who do the prophets insist is the final arbiter of history? *God and*

the Holy Spirit

8. Through whom does God speak today? *His Son*

9. Define a prophet. *One who speaks for another*

10. The Hebrew term from which the word prophet occurs appears how many times in the Old Testament? 400
11. The times of the prophets are covered in what scriptures in the Old Testament?
- a. _____ d. _____
- b. _____ e. _____
- c. _____
12. During the periods covered by the minor prophets Israel and Judah are dominated by what three foreign nations? a. Assyrian
- b. Babylon c. Medo-Persian
13. What three prophets are primarily concerned with events of the northern kingdom?
- a. Jonah b. Amos c. Hosea
14. What was the one certain way to discern between a true and a false prophet? (Deut. 18: 20-22). If what he said came to pass

TRUE OR FALSE

1. F A study of the prophets is valueless to our day.
2. T Man's basic needs are still the same today as in the days of the prophets.
3. T A prophet was also called a man of God.
4. T Augustine first gave the name "minor prophets."
5. F Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 612 B.C.
6. F Malachi prophesied about events that related to the northern kingdom.
7. T Haggai and Zechariah stirred up the people to complete the work on the temple.
8. F Ezra rebuilds the walls around Jerusalem.

The Book of HOSEA

Introduction

- A. With Hosea we turn back the chronological clock to 750 B.C. (see page 111). Contemporary with Jonah, Amos, Micah, and Isaiah, God's prophet is called to preach to the northern ten-tribed kingdom of Israel some thirty years before her demise. He is the prophet of Israel's zero hour. He is her last and final hope.
1. Refusing to hear and heed the warnings of Amos a decade earlier, the northern nation had thus sunk to a point of such internal corruption and sinful degradation that divine judgement was inevitable. And, so, what the weeping Jeremiah would be to ~~Judah~~ a century later, so would the sob-choked Hosea be to Israel now.
 2. It was his unenviable mission to point out to his countrymen the approaching tornado of Jehovah's wrath (8:7) which would culminate in the utterly deserved though heart-rending catastrophe of the Assyrian invasion.
- B. Hosea heads the list of the "minor" prophets. These last twelve prophetic collections are called "Minor", not because they are less important than the others, but because they tend to be more brief.

Dynamic Dozen: The Minor Prophets

PROPHET	Home Town	Approximate Date of Ministry	Meaning of Name	Message of His Book
HOSEA	Unknown	755-715 B.C.	"salvation"	God's loyal love
JOEL	Unknown	835	"Jehovah is God"	plagues past and future
AMOS	Tekoa	760-753	"burden bearer"	Israel ripe for judgment
OBADIAH	Unknown	848-841	"servant of Jehovah"	Edom's doom
JONAH	Gath-hepher	782-753	"dove"	salvation for the Gentiles
MICAH	Moresheh-gath	735-700	"Who is like God?"	justice and injustice
NAHUM	Elkosh	664-654	"consolation"	destruction of Nineveh
HABAKKUK	Unknown	609-605	"embrace"	just shall live by faith
ZEPHANIAH	Unknown	632-628	"Jehovah hides"	day of the Lord
HAGGAI	Babylonia?	520	"festival"	rebuilding the temple
ZECHARIAH	Babylonia?	520-480	"Jehovah remembers"	coming of Messiah
MALACHI	Unknown	432-424	"My messenger"	appeal to backsliders

(The serious student will want to obtain the commentary on the Minor Prophets by Homer Hailey, Baker publication.)

BODY

I. THE BACKGROUND OF THE TIMES

- A. Politically. Note the opening verse:

The word of the Lord which came to Hosea the son of Beeri, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

Judah (755-715 B.C.) Israel

Uzziah 52

H
O
S
E
A

Jotham 16

Ahaz 16

Hezekiah 29

Jeroboam II 41

Zechariah ½

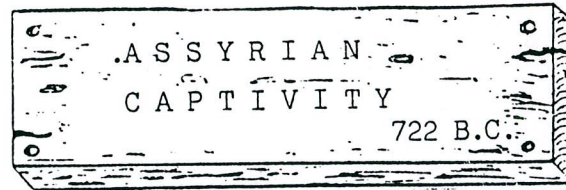
Shallum 1 month

Menahem 10

Pekahiah 2

Pekah 20

Hoshea 9



1. The period from Jeroboam II on to the captivity was the awful "last lap" of iniquity in Israel's downward drive. The kings who follow seize the throne by assassinating its occupant at the time. Shallum slays Zechariah; Menahem murders Shallum; Pekah kills Pekahiah, the son of Menahem; while Hoshea the last northern king, in turn slays Pekah.

a. The sad story is told in 2 Kings 15.

2. These were trying years of political conniving and conspiracy, of anarchy and rebellion, of treachery and murder. Conditions were deplorable. See 4:1-2; 7:7; 8:4; 9:15.

a. Thus, the indian summer period of Jeroboam II gave way to the instability of the final days.

3. Add to this the blundering foreign policy of dependance upon foreign alliances for defense rather than upon the power and protection of Jehovah - and it's no wonder the nation was in serious trouble.

So Ephraim has become like a silly dove, without sense;
They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria (7:11).

(In Hosea, "Ephraim" is used to represent the whole ten-tribed nation of Israel.)

a. See also 7:8-9a, 16b; 10:13-14.

- B. Socially. The people were enjoying prosperity. Hosea lived in a generation which knew nothing of war and hardship. Agriculture flourished, commerce thrived, and cities prospered. The merchants had their summer cottages and winter chateaus along with their houses of ivory (Amos 3:15). Luxury, ease and dissipation characterized the day (for some).

1. For others it was a different story. While the merchants were enriched, the poor were impoverished. Bribery, deceit, loan-sharking, business cheating - all combined to oppress the poor who could not even expect justice in the courts. There was absolutely no mercy toward the needy (12:7-9).

- C. Spiritually. Things were even worse morally and spiritually than in other areas. Ever since the days of the first Jeroboam, when the ten tribes divorced themselves from the house of David to form a separate kingdom, the worship of the golden calf at Bethel had been a snare to Israel. Although the Bethel calf (like the one at Dan to the north) was supposed at first to represent Jehovah, yet in time the idol itself became the object of worship. Such opened the door to other forms of idolatry. And when Israel sought international trade she began to adopt international culture. One thing led to another... It was only a matter of time...

1. Notice the sins of the day denounced by Hosea - 4:2, 10-13; 6:8-9; 7:4a; 10:1-2, 4; 13:2.

2. Such was the sorry state to which Israel had sunk! They were in the midst of a landslide of wickedness. The princes, priests, and people were all saturated in evil - idolatry, drunkenness, debauchery, perjury, violence, banditry, adultery, etc. In fact, adultery was consecrated as a part of the religious rites con-

nected with the idolatrous calf-worship. See 4:14. God was completely left out of the people's thinking.

3. It was to these people amidst these conditions that the sensitive-hearted Hosea lifted up his voice in the name of Jehovah. Yet he was not heard. They had passed the point of no return.

II. THE SYMBOLICAL PROLOGUE

The prophet through the heartbreak of his own marriage tragedy, had come to see Israel's sin against God in its deepest and most awful significance.

First three chapters
A. If we are going to fully understand the passion of Hosea's message, we must first see the significance of these first three chapters. It is the key to the book. Nowhere is there a more touching account. It is the story of a faithless wife and her faithful husband. But it is so much more...

1. Hosea had honorably taken for a wife the woman of his choice and entered into what he thought would be a life-long union of happiness. It was not to be. After the birth of their first child, Gomer is disloyal to Hosea and eventually her adultery is discovered. The next two children born are not his. He names the little girl *Lo-ruhamah* which means "Unloved" or "She-that-never-knew-a-fathers-love." The little boy is named *Lo-ammi*, meaning "Not-my-people," or "No-kin-of-mine" (1:2-9).
 - a. We can imagine the emotional conflicts within Hosea's heart - the sense of shame, a betrayed love, a desecrated home shattered by a wife's unfaithfulness. He had forgiven his disloyal wife once... twice... He had pleaded and warned. Yet things had reached a point of separation (2:5).
 - b. In time, Gomer's occasional adultery affairs turned into full scale prostitution until finally she drifted into total slavery. It is there in 3:1-3 that the compassionate Hosea redeems, forgives, and buys her back.
2. Through his own broken-hearted pathetic one-sided relationship with Gomer and the realization that his children were not his own - it begins to dawn on the prophet that this is what God must feel. This is not the story of a faithless wife and her faithful husband as much as it is a story of a faithless nation and her faithful God.
 - a. Gomer is the nation of Israel. Her children are the people of the nation. Hosea's sorrow, patience, compassion, and his final act of redeeming, chastening, and restoring Gomer is a picture of the sorrow, patience, compassion and love of God toward sinning Israel.
3. If Hosea was going to preach effectively among these people and times he must be able to identify with God's feelings of hurt and sorrow towards *His* unfaithful companion - Israel. Hosea's loyal love for Gomer would reflect Jehovah's love for Israel. And as Gomer had played the harlot so Israel had committed spiritual infidelity. Hosea had to feel what God feels... He had to see what God sees...
 - a. And he did! From his own personal experience he came to understand the true meaning of Israel's sin - harlotry! Adultery is defined as "seeking satisfaction in unlawful relations." That is exactly what Israel had done when she forsook God and bowed before her handmade dieties. Sixteen times the prophet uses the word "Whoredom" as the charge against God's people.
 - b. Hosea will tell them of how God had taken them to Himself in a special relationship, had loved them, carried them in His arms, taught them to walk, been a husband to them, provided a home for them - AND THEY UNGRATEFULLY WENT AFTER OTHER GODS/LOVERS, 11:1,3-4,7.
 - c. They prostituted their high privilege with the lascivious indulgence of idolatry. As a result their children were spiritually illegitimate (5:7). Hosea understood. He had been there himself!

Love Suffers Long... See 11:3. God hates the sin but loves the sinner! As Hosea would redeem Gomer, God would redeem Israel. Chapter 2:14-23 is entirely Messianic. It speaks of a new wedding (vs.19) based upon a new covenant (vs.18) with new bless-

ings (vs.21-23). Paul quotes verse 23 in Romans 9:25-26 and Peter in 1 Peter 2:10 showing their New Testament fulfillment and application.

II. OUTLINE

Prologue: A Faithless Wife - A Faithful Husband.
(Ch.1-3) A Faithless Nation - A Faithful God

- I. Israel's Sin Is Intolerable: GOD IS HOLY! Ch.4-7
 - A. *Destroyed* for lack of knowledge, ch.4.
 - B. *Displeasure* of Jehovah, ch.5.
 - C. *Delights* of Jehovah, ch.6.
 - D. *Disastrous* foreign policy, ch.7.
- II. Israel Shall Be Punished: GOD IS JUST! Ch.8-10
 - A. Sowing and Reaping, ch.8-10
- III. Israel Shall Be Restored: GOD IS LOVE! Ch.11-14
 - A. *Restoration*, ch.11.
 - B. *Rebellion*, ch.12.
 - C. *Removal*, ch.13.
 - D. *Repentance*, ch.14.

IV. A CLOSER LOOK...

- ✓ A. Israel's Sin Is Intolerable: GOD IS HOLY, ch.4-7. Speaking with vigor and a voice of emotion Hosea immediately and without a hint of hesitation presents Jehovah's lawsuit before the people (4:1-2). The people stand guilty and defenseless before God's accusations.
 - 1. The real reason behind Jehovah's case? *"My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge"* (4:6). Six times in this section the Lord lists the reason behind the charge: 4:1,6; 5:4; 6:1-3,6. In a nation founded by God, built upon godly principles, and centered around the temple of God, it seems incredible to think that there was no knowledge of God. But the issue was not *facts* about God; the issue was *firsthand experience* with God!
 - a. *The Lord does not want us to know about Him as much as He wants us to know HIM!*
 - 2. Here we see, too, the failure of the people due to a failure in leadership. The people forgot because the priests didn't teach (4:6). Instead, the priests encouraged sinning in order that they might better prosper through the sacrifices offered for sin (4:7-10).
 - a. Due to this condition the trumpet of warning is sounded in 5:1,8. Jehovah will turn from them until they *"acknowledge their guilt and seek His face"* (5:15).
 - 3. In chapter 6 the nation superficially "returns" to "know" the Lord but they don't really mean it - and Jehovah knows it. (vs.4-6).
 - a. Located here also is a warning to the southern kingdom in verse 11.
 - 4. In chapter 7 Israel's sin has reached the toleration limit. Verse 1 is an indictment against Israel as a nation, Ephraim as the ruling tribe, and Samaria as the capital city - all are involved.
 - a. And the only One who could help her climb out of the depths of degradation and ward off her coming calamity - was ignored (vs.7).
- ✓ B. Israel Shall Be Punished: GOD IS JUST, Ch.8-10. The apostle Paul summarizes this section well when he said: *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap"* (Galatians 6:7). The warning is sounded. The reason is given (vs.1). The result is certain. Verse 7:

For they sow the wind, And they shall reap the whirlwind!

There would be chastening instead of compassion, punishment in place of pardon, and exile rather than encouragement.

- a. See verse 13b. Many times in prophetic writings Egypt is used as a symbol of bondage. The people would not literally return to Egypt. Egypt represents captivity (9:3).
2. In chapter 9 we can sense the emotion of God's spokesman in verse 1: "For you have played the harlot, forsaking your God." How well he knew!
 - a. Key verses 9,10,17
3. Chapter 10 brings the message that the price must be paid - "the wages of sin is death." See verse 2. Verse 8 describes the terror of coming judgement. Verse 12 is what should have been. Verse 13 is what was.

✓ C. Israel Shall Be Restored: GOD IS LOVE, ch.11-14.

1. Chapter 11 is a scrapbook of Israel's past (vs.1-7).
2. In chapter 12-13 God pleads with His people present: "Return to your God, Observe kindness and justice, And wait for your God continually" (12:6). The people refused to listen (12:8-9,14). Rather they sinned "more and more" (13:2).
 - a. As a result God would cause the idolaters to vanish from the land like (1) the morning cloud, (2) dew, (3) chaff, (4) smoke (13:3).
 - b. What a lesson for us in 13:6. They became satisfied - then proud - then they forgot God. Seems like there might be a good sermon in that!
 - c. See also 13:9-11
3. Past, Present and now Future. In verses 1-3 you have the steps necessary for restoration:
 - a. Return unto the Lord (14:1). Remember, if God seems distant from you, it must mean you have moved!
 - b. Confess your sin to the Lord (14:2). Look up 1 John 1:9 sometime.
 - c. Put your confidence in the Lord (14:3).
 - 1) As a result God promises to heal apostasy and love freely (vs.4).
4. Verse 8 is the final triumph of love. Judgement is finished. Sin is forsaken. Backsliding is healed. Love reigns.

[Ephraim says, "What have I to do with idols?"]

[Jehovah responds, "It is I who answer and look after you"]

[Ephraim says, "I am like a luxuriant cypress"]

[Jehovah responds, "From Me comes your fruit"]

Conclusion

1. Too many times we think of God as angry, threatening and hostile toward sinners - and we are right in so thinking, for God must necessarily be as the moral Governor and Judge of the human race. He cannot excuse sin and remain consistent with His holy nature.
2. But there is another side that perhaps we often overlook. It is the side of God represented in Hosea. God sustains four principle relationships to man: a) Creator, b) King, c) Judge, d) Father.
 - a. Now, which of these four supplied the fundamental motive for bringing the human race into being? Did God create merely to possess? Did God create merely to reign? Did God create merely to judge? No, these three relationships do not supply the motive. It is His Fatherhood which is ultimate.
3. God created us for fellowship with Himself. That means that sin hurts and grieves the very heart of God. You see, sin does not merely break God's law, it also breaks God's heart. If you do not think so, take a look at Calvary.
 - a. Yes, whether it be Hosea's metaphor of the grieving husband, or our Lord's parable picture of the Prodigal's compassionate father, the truth is there:

HUMAN SIN HURTS GOD! 

- b. That's what God wanted Hosea to see. That's what God wants you to see!

Whoever is wise, let him understand these things: Whoever is discerning, let him know them.

For the ways of the Lord are right, And the righteous will walk in them,

But the transgressors will stumble in them.

--Hosea 14:9

Hosea Successive Steps in Israel's National Downfall.

1. Lack of Knowledge - 4:6
2. Pride 5:5
3. Instability 6:4
4. Wickedness 7:8
5. Corruption 9:9
6. Backsliding 11:7
7. Idolatry 13:2
- 8.

Lessons Learned:

1. The inward corruption of a nation is more dangerous for its existence than its external enemies.
2. The folly of sacrificing national interest to personal ^{5:10-11}
3. The penalty of condoning vice 4:13-19
4. The rapid decline of a nation when the religious leaders become corrupt; "like people, like priest" 4:9
5. The Nemesis of neglecting God's Law (4:6; 8:1, 12)
6. God's fatherly desire to show mercy (Hosea), this Hebrew word is frequent in the Psalms, closely akin to grace - used 6 times by Hosea - 2:19; 4:1; 6:4, 6; 10:12; 12:6)

The Minor Prophets - George L. Robinson,
pp. 26-27

HOSEA:

"They return, but not to the Most High" (Hosea 7: 16) - Lessons from an adulterous wife

Ian McPherson

Hosea is the only prophet who lived among the Northern tribes of Israel. At the time of his prophecy, the idolatry introduced by Jeroboam the Son of Nebat had spiraled, and the idolatrous land had now reached its zenith of corruption and immorality under Jeroboam II. *"Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood."* Hosea 4:1-2

The fact that Israel would be taken away into Assyria forms the basis of the book. The text given to me for this Lectureship, shows the condition of Israel at the time, and why they had reached that condition *"They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt"* (Hosea 7:16). "Deceitful" means "idle or slothful", and "their princes" are their leaders of Israel. The text tells us that because of Israel's sloth, and the scoffing of their leaders, they would be defeated in war and taken back into the type of captivity from which they were originally called out of when they were enslaved in Egypt.

HOSEA IS A BOOK OF DOOM. It opens with Hosea taking a wife and children of whoredom as God asked him to *"The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord"* (Hosea 1:3).

This family of Hosea and Gomer becomes a sort of parable which forms the theme of the book. Hosea, as a faithful husband represents God. Gomer, his adulterous wife represents God's bride, and the three children (Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-ammi) represent the children of Israel. The names God gave these children are significant (V6- 9).

Jezreel (1:4-5) means "God scatters" or "God sows". "Jezreel" was the place where Jehu put an end to the house of Ahab as the Lord had commanded him to. However, because Jehu himself was also wicked, God lost His patience, and decided to scatter Israel among the nations of Assyria from which they would never return. .

By starting their names with the prefix "Lo" which means "not" God informed Israel of their doom. **Lo-ruhamah** meant "no mercy" and **Lo-ammi** meant "not my people" Thus indicating that God's patience had run out, and that God would no longer grant mercy to the children of Israel, and that they would no longer be regarded as His children.

These two eldest children were actually illegitimate. They were raised in Hosea's home but were children of harlotry, fathered by Gomer's lovers (**Hosea 2:4-5**). The Northern tribes were actually illegitimate right from the beginning when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, their founder made them a separated body to Judah. He made priests from those who were not Levites, established his own feast days, and introduced them to Idolatry by setting up golden calves for them to worship in Dan and Bethel. (1 Kings 12:25-33).

HOSEA IS ALSO A BOOK OF HOPE. Although the book prophecies the doom of Israel as it is taken into captivity, Hosea is a book of hope. Actually in every negative prophecy there is a seed of hope.

Mercy will come through Judah “*But I will have **mercy upon the house of Judah**, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.* (Hosea 1:7). This verse like all those that promise forgiveness and hope to Israel is a Messianic prophecy. Mercy here was not promised to Judah in the fleshly sense, but to those who would receive mercy through the coming Messiah, the descendent of Judah through David (2 Samuel 7:12-17, Isaiah 7:13-14, 11:1)

Jezreel will become great “*Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: **for great shall be the day of Jezreel.***” These verses are quoted in Romans 9:25-28 and applied to salvation in Christ, when the faithful remnant of Jews, together with faithful gentiles, were joined together in the church. This was the promise that was given through Abraham before the Law of Moses was given (Genesis 12:3, Galatians 3:26-29, Hosea 1:10-11)

The Mercy and deliverance of faithful Israel is predicted in this passage by changing the names of Gomer's children to Ruhamah and Ammi. Without the prefix “Lo” their names change their meaning to “mercy” and “my people”, thus showing that God is still concerned about them and will save them if they change their ways Chapter 2 begins with a plea from their faithful brethren to repent (2:1-2).

The church began when 3000 Jews who were scattered among the nations accepted the gospel call to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:27-42). This was the beginning of the church. Soon many gentiles also accepted the gospel call and joined this faithful remnant of Jews in the one body. (2 Samuel 7:12-17, Isa 11:1).

Jezreel became great when the Messiah came and granted mercy to Israel. The word “Jezreel” means God scatters or God sows. In the first instance, Israel was scattered among the nations and Jezreel became a day of doom (Hosea 1:4-5). But just as seed must die before it can spring to life, the gospel harvest burst into life in the first century when God's faithful seed was germinated

GOMER REPENTS AND RETURNS (Chapter 3) Her adultery brought irreversible consequences. However, like the prodigal son, Gomer saw her error, came to her senses and sought Hosea's mercy (Hosea 2:7). Hosea received her back but did not resume his marital relationship with her for many days until she was fully cured of her harlotry. This typified how a remnant of Israel who were scattered among the nations would return “*Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.*” Hosea 3:5. This is a “latter days” prophecy which was fulfilled when faithful, repentant Jews accepted the gospel (See Acts 2:17, Isaiah 2:1-2). Since David was already dead, “David their king” mentioned here clearly refers to the Messiah.

THERE WAS EVEN HOPE IN EGYPT. Although Jehovah told Israel that they would “return to derision in the land of Egypt” (7:16). He also said to them *When Israel was a*

child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. Hosea 11:1. This was quoted in Matthew 2:15 as referring to Egypt being the place safety and deliverance for God's Son.

Thus the book of Hosea is a great love story, showing how God continued to love Israel in spite of the fact that they were unfaithful to him, and as soon as they came to their senses and returned with penitent hearts he received them back and saved them through his Son.

HOSEA IS A BOOK OF APPLICATION. There are many vital lessons we can learn about adultery and how it influences marriage and society. Here are some of these lessons:

ADULTERY IS ADDICTIVE Finding a virtuous wife is a difficult thing at the best of times. King Lemuel said *"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies."* (Proverbs 31:10). Hosea made a bad choice, in choosing Gomer. He suffered the consequences. Soon after they married, Gomer had two illegitimate children. This is because she had developed a "spirit of whoredoms". . *"They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the **spirit of whoredoms** is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord". "* (**Hosea 5:4**). *"Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart."* (**Hosea 4:11**). Illicit sex is addictive like alcohol and cigarettes. Gomer became so addicted TO immorality that she could not see the value of living faithfully and thought that sex was the way to happiness.

Many a person has suffered because they married someone with "the spirit of whoredoms. I knew a faithful young Christian man who converted a prostitute during a campaign. He fell in love and married her. As soon as the honeymoon was over he came to me in tears because his wife had not turned up one evening. It was not hard to find her; she had spent the night with some previous lovers. She had committed adultery within the first week of marriage. Any Christian who marries a person of the world today has a very real chance of their marriage ending like this.

IT SHOULD BE A CAPITAL CRIME Under the Law of Moses, adultery was a capital crime, *"And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the **adulterer and the adulteress** shall surely be put to death Lev 20:10.* The mean of Capital punishment was generally stoning (Deuteronomy 22:24). The criminal was either tied to a post or buried waist deep and the whole congregation would gather around and throw stones. Stones were small enough to not kill instantly. Sometime death would take ten minutes or so. God ordained this punishment because he knew how destructive adultery was to society.

The reason Israel was in such a mess was because they no longer punished adulterers, but gave them free license to practice it wherever they wanted to. The motor car is a great blessing to man if driven responsibly. Imagine however what carnage would result on our roads if all men were free to drive cars without a licence. Sex, if confined to the marriage bed is honourable and undefiled, and should be practiced freely and romantically. (See also 1 Corinthians 7:3-5; Song of Solomon 4:8-16). However if it is practiced without a marriage licence it brings terrible carnage. It deprives people of their happiness, robs them of wives and husbands, and breaks up their families. Child abuse is rightly considered a terrible crime in today's society, yet adultery, in homes where there are children is terrible child abuse. Although adultery is not punished by man we can be sure it will be by God on judgment day. . *"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."* (Hebrews 13:4)

LESSONS FROM A LOVING HUSBAND.

Although Hosea's wife was unfaithful, he still loved her. *"Then said the Lord unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine. Hosea 3:1.* This is the woman he married and shared his life with. Notice that continued love is a command of God. It is too often the case that hatred and vengeance results when a person's marriage partner commits adultery. This may be a natural reaction, but anger, vengeance and hatred should never be a part of the Christian character. Look how Hosea reacted.

He remained faithful to his marriage vow. It is often the case that a victim of adultery soon goes and does the same thing themselves. When this happens you become a hypocrite and lose your right to another spouse. It would be rather hypocritical to approach the divorce court with a lover's arms around you and say: "Your honour I want to divorce my wife for adultery. Matthew 19:9 infers that the one putting away his fornicating spouse is virtuous.

He had Gomer back when she repented *"Then said the Lord unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine. So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley: And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee." (Hosea 3:1-3).* After her adultery, Hosea had three options. He could have had her put to death as commanded in the Law. He could have divorced her and married another as Matthew 19:9 permits or he could live a chaste single life and hope for an eventual reconciliation. He chose the latter option.

WHAT IF HOSEA HAD DIVORCED HER AND MARRIED ANOTHER?

His life and family are still seriously affected. Even if a divorce is for fornication the innocent party is still greatly affected. Children are still left with a separated parent. Property still has to be divided. The guilty spouse will probably still have visiting rights. The innocent party may still have to pay for child care.

She would have no place for repentance. Like Esau she will find no place for repentance even though they may seek it with tears (**Hebrews 12:16-17**). The way of the transgressors is hard (Proverbs 13:15). Those who divorce their wives for fornication however, need to think about this. There are no winners when adultery takes place.

The lesson from Hosea is that we must remain faithful at all costs. No difficulty in marriage will be solved by committing adultery. It has devastating consequences for the adulterer as well as the innocent family. Society also suffers

In closing, let us consider Jehovah's love to us. Aren't we glad that he loved us like Hosea loved Gomer? What if he had cut Israel off completely and left no room for his people to return. This would have left humanity without a Christ, and without a church.

The Historical Background and Conditions During Hosea's prophecy – Kings of Judah

- A. Uzziah – King of Judah – 52 Years
 - 1. Read from II Chronicles 26:1-23.
 - 2. Read from Background of Isaiah.
- B. Jotham – King of Judah – 16 Years (740-735 B.C.).
 - 1. He accomplished much.
 - 2. His success explained in II Chronicles 27:6.
- C. Ahaz – King of Judah – 16 years (735-715 B.C.).
 - 1. Wicked
 - 2. II Chronicles 28:1 ff
 - 3. II Kings 16:5-10
 - 4. II Kings 17:5, 6, 7-9, 13, 14

Israel – Kings

- A. Jereboam II – King of Israel – 41 years
 - 1. Evil king, but a very capable man.
 - 2. Jonah prophesied during this time.
- B. Zachariah – Son of Jereboam – Killed by Shallum – Reign 6 months (II Kings 15:8-11).
- C. Shallum – Reign 1 month – Killed by Menahem – II Kings 15:14.
- D. Menahem – Reign 10 years – Paid Paul, king of Assyria, 1,000 talents of silver.
- E. Pekahiah – His son reigned 2 years – He was killed by Pekah, army captain – II Kings 15:23-25.
- F. Pekah – Reign 20 years – Killed by Hoshea – II Kings 15:27-31.

Dead Sea Scrolls:

1. Cave 1 – Full text and commentary on Habakkuk 1 and 2 as well as fragments of Hosea and Micah.
2. Cave 2 – Seraps of Jonah.
3. Cave 4 – Had parts of all minor prophets except Obadiah, Habakkuk and Haggai – Minor Commentaries on Hosea and Nahum.
4. Other caves – remainder of books at least fragments found.
5. Have them draw period and place dates and events.

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The Agony of Unrequited Love

Man and woman were designed for one another. There is no greater relationship on earth than the love shared by a devoted husband and wife. The fact is, the marriage union is the only relationship wherein man and woman have the divine authorization for physical intimacy (Gen. 2:24).

Humanity has been intrigued with “love stories” since the commencement of history. Many of these, unfortunately, have been marred by immorality. Nonetheless, passionate romances intrigue.

Antony and Cleopatra, Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Abelard and Heloise, Brown-ing and Barrett (“How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.”) – the list is long and diverse.

But the greatest love saga of all time lies within the Old Testament. It involved God’s prophet, Hosea. As one Old Testament scholar has observed, “In all the world’s literature there is no record of human love like that of Hosea” (Robinson, 21).

Historical Background

A little more than 900 years before the Savior’s birth, the Hebrew nation split. In the northern region of Canaan, with a capital at Samaria and embracing ten tribes, there arose a faction known as “the kingdom of Israel.” The regime in the south, principally with two tribes and headquarters at Jerusalem, stood apart as “the kingdom of Judah.” Each regime had its own line of kings, and frequently there was tension and bitterness between these antagonistic brethren.

The northern kingdom commenced in the throes of apostasy, when Jeroboam, son

of Nebat, started a “denomination” involving “calf worship,” with idols erected in Bethel and Dan (see 1 Kgs. 12:25-33). Thus was there accelerated a decline in the north that would end in disaster 210 years later, with the Assyrian invasion (722/21 B.C.).

Five of Jehovah’s prophets were associated with the northern kingdom. Jonah was a missionary sent to preach to Nineveh. Elijah and Elisha rebuked the idolatry of the homeland, but neither produced any written work. Amos, from the southern kingdom, warned of the fall that would come to Israel if she failed to mend her ways. Hosea was the solitary writing prophet of the north.

Hosea (whose name signifies “salvation”) did his prophetic work at some point within the administration of Jeroboam II (c. 782-753 B.C.). His regime was characterized by successful military conquests and great material prosperity. Yet, it was marred by gross idolatry and indulgence of the vilest sort. The writings of both Amos and Hosea paint a stark portrait of this degenerating nation that edged toward the brink of destruction, and that eventually would fall to the brutal Assyrians.

Amos described how the poor were oppressed while the rich grew fat. Drunkenness and sexual abuse was rampant. Idolatry was practiced profusely and openly. Those who sought to be faithful were persecuted (Am. 2:6-12).

Hosea’s message compliments that of Amos. The people of the northern kingdom were ignorant of God’s truth (4:6), and their arrogant pride was abominable (5:5). Hence, Jehovah would “withdraw” his fellowship from them (5:6). The nation was fickle, on

and off, like a morning cloud or evaporating dew (6:4). Their worship was hypocritical; sacrifices were offered, but they were void of common goodness and were intertwined with idolatrous ceremonialism (6:6; 13:2). They were a “deeply corrupted” people (9:9). The nation fraternized with the pagans; they were rotting, yet were wholly unaware of their disease (7:8-9). Israel had set her mind toward a departure from the true God (11:7).

Samaria was located some 35 miles north of Jerusalem. The city had been founded about a hundred years before Hosea’s time. A number of archaeological excavations have been carried out at the site of the ancient city. One scholar, Professor Howard Vos, has observed that these explorations “proved to be particularly fruitful in illuminating and confirming the biblical record” (Vos, 246).

For example, numerous pottery fragments were found with inscriptions of names thereon. Not a few of these had “Baal” as a compound designation (cf. Baal-Shalishah - 2 Kgs. 4:42), demonstrating how deeply idolatry had infiltrated the nation. Jezebel, Ahab’s ungodly wife, had been a missionary for evil in the land.

Also the luxury of the era has been well illustrated by the palace with its walls of inlaid ivory, and remnants of furniture with carved ivory adornment. This cannot but remind the Bible student of Amos’ rebuke of those who “lie on beds of ivory, and stretch themselves on their couches” (Am. 6:4; cf. 3:15; 1 Kgs. 22:39). Some of the ivory trinkets from Samaria, with replications of various false gods, may be seen in the British Museum (Mitchell, 54).

Hosea's Wife and Children

God said take unto thee a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom; for the land doth commit great whoredom, departing from Jehovah (1:2). God knew in his infinite wisdom that the seeds of harlotry had been sown in Gomer, daughter of Diblaim, and examples all around her had so influenced her that she had become such. When Hosea married her, she was beautiful and pure, but, alas she partook of the habits of the people of her generation. This of course broke his heart. He loved his wife and truly desired her faithfulness. But that was the very purpose of God asking him to do such a thing. Israel had departed from God. They had one after gods of the Canaanites; El, Baal and Dagon. Their female goddesses were Asherah, Astarte, and Anath. Their worship was purely pagan in its nature. It was connected with their farming. In order to produce fertility in man, beast, and crops in the field, they would conduct ritualistic acts of fornication, men with harlots and women with other men who were not their husbands. God made it known to Hosea that he would not punish Ephraim's daughters "when they play the harlot, nor your brides when they commit adultery: for the men themselves go apart with harlots, and they sacrifice with prostitutes; and the people that doth not understand shall be overthrown" (4:14). The brides committed adultery and daughters played the harlot under every green tree, the oaks, the poplars, and the terebinths, "because the shadow thereof is good" (4:13). They sacrificed upon the hills. Whoredom and wine had taken away their understanding (4:11).

This was the tragedy of it all: they were ignorant. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4:6). They rejected knowledge and this was why God had rejected them, and they would be no priest to him, they had forgotten the law of their God," "I wrote for Ephraim the 10,000 things of my law; but they are as a strange thing" (8:12). In his writing, Ephraim (the largest tribe representing Israel) was both a wife to God and a son. God had loved Israel when he was a child and "called my son out of Egypt" (11:1). God had taught Israel how to walk and had taken them on his arms, but they did not know that it was he who had healed them" (11:4).

Hosea also portrayed Israel as a wife to God. And that is the thrust of his writing. Jehovah wanted Israel to see how terrible their apostasy really was. They should have been able to see the bitterness and pain in his heart when Gomer played the harlot and bore the children of harlotry. They should have seen how he dearly loved her and, though she had grievously sinned and had broken their marital covenant, he was still forgiving and, according to God's instructions, he went again and loved Gomer who had become an adulteress (3:1).

The value of this illustration is in our ability to abhor Gomer's conduct. All sensitive people will. It is when we can sense the ugliness of her deeds that we can see the magnitude of Hosea's love and forgiveness.

HOSEA

I. THE NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. The book is named for its author, the prophet Hosea.
- B. Hosea means “salvation” or “deliverance” and is from the same root as Joshua and the Greek form, Jesus.

II. THE PROPHET HOSEA

- A. It is generally thought that Hosea was a native of the North, possibly Samaria, but nothing is said of his early life or his home. His father, Beeri, is mentioned in 1:1.
- B. As Amos stressed the righteousness of God, Hosea stressed the love of God and his life mirrored his message.
- C. Hosea has been called “the weeping prophet” of Israel, just as Jeremiah was for Judah.

III. THE DATE OF THE WRITING OF THE BOOK

- A. Hosea prophesied during the reign of four kings in Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.
- B. He also prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel, as well as others not mentioned.
- C. His ministry is generally set at ca. 780-726 B.C., which would have been a rather long period of time for a prophet to prophesy.

IV. THE OCCASION FOR THE WRITING OF THE BOOK

- A. At this time, Israel was prospering outwardly but was decaying inwardly.
- B. Socially, religiously, morally, and politically, Israel was everything God did not want her to be.
 - 1. The word “whoredom” is used 16 times in the book to describe the condition of the nation.
 - 2. Israel’s catalogue of sins is given in such passages as 4:6,11; 5:5; 6:4,10; 7:8; 9:9-10; 11:6-8; 13:2.
 - 3. Nine stinging accusations are made by the prophet against Israel: 4:1; 4:4-11; 4:13-15; 5:1-2; 5:3-7; 6:4/10:2; 7:11; 12:8.
 - 4. Vivid figures are used to show the sins of which Israel was guilty: 3:1; 4:11; 4:16; 6:9; 7:4; 7:7; 7:8; 7:11; 7:16; 8:8; 8:9.
- C. Hosea’s efforts were designed to turn Israel back to God, and he is the first to compare the relationship of God and His people to a marriage relationship.
- D. Two ideas permeate Hosea’s message:
 - 1. God’s loving faithfulness to Israel, and
 - 2. Israel’s ingratitude and unfaithfulness to God.

V. A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

- A. Hosea and Unfaithful Gomer – Chapters 1-3

HOSEA - Lesson Two

Introduction:

1. Read 2 Kings 14 - 17 as a background to the book of Hosea.
2. Read the book of Hosea.
3. "The book of Hosea stands first among the writings of the 'Minor Prophets,' not because it was thought to be the earliest (for of this there is no proof), but because it is the longest." (Cheyne).
 - a. It has 197 verses.
 - b. Hosea is the prophet of love in the Old Testament.

Discussion:

I. Some vital facts about Hosea.

- A. Hosea prophesied to the Northern Kingdom called Israel or Ephraim.
 1. "He has the distinction of being the only writing prophet of the Northern Kingdom." (Lewis).
 2. He prophesied during the darkest period of the kingdom of Israel.
- B. Hosea seems to have prophesied in the years following 746 B.C., possibly 745 B.C. to 725 B.C. This was shortly after the time of Amos.
- C. Hosea means "God is salvation" or "Deliverance." The core and content of his message is the plea of a "return" to God, a word that is used 15 times in the book of Hosea.
- D. Hosea is a walking example of the lesson he presents. He marries an adulterous woman and to this union three children are born and each is given a name which is part of the prophet's preaching.
 1. Jezreel. "God scatters" which was a threat to the reigning house. Also element of hope. (Hosea 1:11; 2:22, 23)
 2. Loruhamah. "Not pitied" is a threat that God will not pity and forgive the house of Israel. (cf. Hosea 1:6, 7)
 3. Loammi. "Not my people" is the threat of a broken relationship. (Hosea 1:8, 9)

II. God's revelation of their condition and call to repentance.

- A. During the reign of Jereboam II, Israel reached a great state of prosperity, they drifted into an easy, careless life, which led to their destruction.
- B. George L. Robinson lists six specific sins for which they were guilty:
 1. Lack of knowledge. Hosea 4:6, 11.
 - 2. Pride. ~~6:4~~ *Hos. 5:5*
 3. Instability. 6:4.
 4. Worldliness. 7:8.
 5. Backsliding. 11:7.
 6. Idolatry. 13:2.
- C. Hosea lists some serious faults present in Israel.
 1. Their religion consisted of outward forms at the expense of inward reality. 6:6.
 - a. The "multiplication of altars and sacrifices was not pleasing to God as long as it was not accompanied by the proper attitudes. The religious hypocrisy of Hosea's

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of

day was patent to God. . ." (Samuel J. Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960, p. 390.)

- b. "It is impossible to express goodness and knowledge apart from obedience to the commands of God, yet it is possible to obey outward forms and fail to please God because of the corruptness of the heart." (Ellis).
 - c. God desires goodness, mercy and knowledge. (Hosea 6:4-6)
 - 2. They had transgressed or broken covenant with God. (Hosea 6:7). It was wilfully broken by man.
 - 3. They were guilty of murder. (Hosea 6:8) "Gilead" is the name of a district and "city" is used here in the sense that the whole land was full of evildoers. "Political and social corruptness led to murder and bloodshed throughout the land."
 - 4. The priest, the leaders of the people, had become robbers. (6:9)
 - 5. They were guilty of whoredom or "spiritual adultery." (6:10) They had joined with other nations and forsaken God. They revered the calves of Samaria. (8:5; 10:5f).
 - 6. There was international intrigue. Acting like a silly dove that will be caught Israel first seeks help from Assyria and then Egypt, not realizing that God was their help. (7:11-16)
 - 7. Israel trusted in their great military might to save them instead of trusting in God. (10:13)
- D. "Hosea concludes his book by asking 'Who is wise?' Who is prudent? The answer is clearly seen. He who walks in the ways of the Lord." (The Old Testament Books and Their Message in the Christian Age, "Hosea", Chester M. Hill, The Manney Co., 1961, p. 372)

III. Some thoughts from Hosea in the New Testament.

- A. The expression, "not my people." (2:23; 1:10) appears in Romans 9:25, 26 and the thought is in 1 Pet. 2:10. The people who were not his people but were to become his people were the Gentiles.
- B. In Hosea 6:6, we read, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." Jesus used this statement to rebuke "those who found fault because he had mercy on sinners and because his disciples ate grain on the Sabbath." (Matt. 12:7)
- C. In Hosea 11:1, we read, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." This refers to the exodus experience of Israel out of Egypt, but Matthew's application of the passage "to the experience of Jesus makes it quite clear that Matthew understands the word 'fulfill' to include typical fulfillment." (Lewis). (Matt. 2:15)

DISCUSSION & THOUGHT QUESTIONS - Give Scripture

1. When did Hosea write?

What are the background scriptures to Hosea?

2. Who was Hosea's father?

3. Who was Hosea's wife?

4. Give Hosea's children's names and the meaning of each:

a.

b.

c.

5. What did Hosea's wife become after he married her?

(In the same manner Israel had forsaken God and followed other nations.)

6. Hosea 2:23 is quoted in Romans 9:25 and referred to what people?

7. Hosea later found his wife sold in the common market and bought her back for how much?

8. God had a controversy with Israel because he did not find what three things in the land?

a.

b.

c.

9. Why did God say his people are destroyed?

10. What two things did God desire more than sacrifice and burnt offerings?

a.

b.

11. What men had become as a "troop of robbers?"

12. Who did God say would "come as an eagle against" Israel because they had transgressed his covenant? (cf. 5:13)

13. God said Israel hath "sown the wind" but shall reap the

How do men always reap? (Gal 6:7, 8;; 2 Cor. 9:6, 7)

14. What did God do for Israel when yet a child?

15. What did God say his people were bent on doing?

Explain.

16. Where did God tell Israel her help was to be found?

17. Name some evil characteristics of Israel. (The evil characteristic is not necessarily named in the verse, but it may just be described.)

a. Hosea 4:6 ignorance

b. Hosea 5:5

c. Hosea 7:8

d. Hosea 8:1

e. Hosea 9:9

f. Hosea 11:7

g. Hosea 12:7

h. Hosea 13:2

_____ add line

18. List as many sins as you can from the following verses of which Israel was guilty: (Hosea

4:2, 10, 11, 14; 5:2, 7; 6:9)

19. Throughout this book God said Israel or Ephraim is like or as several things. See how many you can find and be ready to explain each.

- a. "Israel slideth back" "as a backsliding heifer" 4:16
- b. "for your goodness is"
- c. "I found Israel like"
- d. "Ephraim also is like"
- e. "As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like"
- f. "And Ephraim is as"

20. Despite Israel's many sins God still pleaded with them to do what?

TRUE OR FALSE:

- 1. Israel was guilty of spiritual adultery by joining with other nations.
- 2. Hosea buying back his wife was a picture of God buying Israel back.
- 3. Israel had forgotten the law of God.
- 4. The people were like the priests who were corrupt.
- 5. God said he would be unto Ephraim as a moth.
- 6. God described Ephraim as a "cake not turned."
- 7. The expression "Ephraim is like a silly dove without a heart" means without understanding.
- 8. Ephraim did not make many altars.
- 9. The "day of visitation" in 9:7 referred to the final judgment day.
- 10. Despite all that Israel had done it grieved God to give her up.

VITAL LESSON FOR OUR DAY:

- 1. Man's proper relationship with God is to know God - "no mere intellectual knowledge, but is rather an intimate relationship that comes by living with and for him and must be persistently pursued." (Lewis) Hosea 6:3.
- 2. Disloyalty to God is vividly pictured as "spiritual adultery." He uses the word "whoredom" 16 times. How can the same be done today?
- 3. God's great love for us is amazing despite our weakness and sins. As God loved Israel so he loves his church today. Acts 20:28; Eph. 2:20; 5:23 ff.
- 4. This love must be reciprocated - paid back. Serve him and love and serve others.

HOSEA--STUDIES IN GOD'S LOVE

Charles R. Williams

Introduction:

- I. Why study the Old Testament
 1. Not because it is binding on us as a religious system.
 2. God requires it. Jno. 5:39; Rom. 15:4.
 3. Man needs it.
 - a. To strengthen faith. Rom. 10:17
 - b. To aid in understanding the New. 2 Tim. 3:15.
- II. Why devote time to this particular book?
 1. Hosea not the longest book--14 chapter, 197 verses
 2. Not more important than any other.
 - a. Isaiah - with his great Messianic prophecies.
 - b. Jeremiah - the weeping prophet with his great heart of compassion
 - c. Ezekiel - the great prophet of the exile emphasizing the glory of God
 - d. Daniel - the great prophet of the spiritual kingdom that was to consume all others
 3. Not even considered as a "major" prophet
 4. Because he is the prophet of love of the Old Testament, surpassed only by John in the New Testament.
 - a. Hosea's message of love and the possibility of forgiveness was needed to balance the sternness of Amos' emphasis on righteousness. Amos 5 and 6.
- III. Let us now turn our attention to a brief study of this great prophet and the message of this book. This book falls into two divisions: 1-3; 4-14.

dy:

- I. The story of the prodigal wife (Chapter 1-3) suggests Jesus' story of the Prodigal Son, one of the most touching stories in literature.
 1. Presents many questions:
 - A. Were Hosea and Gomer really married?
 - a. Figurative? - Nothing in text to suggest it.
 - b. Literal? - Favored by plain reading of text.
 - B. Was Hosea asked to do something wrong?
 - a. cf. Abraham and Isaac
 - (1) Objection Abraham didn't really offer Isaac.
 - (2) Answer. Offered him in his heart at beginning of journey--a substitute.
 - b. Was not it possible for God and Hosea to have forgiven Gomer?
 - c. Did not God forgive Israel of the whoredoms of her youth in Egypt? Ezekiel 16: Ezekiel 23:3-4.
 - d. "Such were some of you" 1 Cor. 6
 - e. Love would demand forgiveness.
 2. Hosea and Gomer's children
 - A. "Children of whoredom" - had already borne these when he married her.
 - B. Jezreel - prophesy of the destruction of Israel.
 - C. LORUHAMA (Not pitied)
 - D. LOAMMI (not my people)
 3. Three lessons of each chapter
 - A. First chapter: Israel's condition when selected by Jehovah.
 - B. Second chapter: Israel's awful fall.
 - C. Third chapter: Israel's ransom price paid--15 pieces of silver and a Homer and a half of Barley.
- II. Israel's apostasy from God. 4-14.
 1. 4-5 The terrible results of Israel's fall
 - A. Chapter 4: The sins of the people--no Truth, Mercy, Knowledge.
 - B. Chapter 5: The priests and rulers God had hidden his face--5:15.

2. Chapter 6:1-3 Israel's penitent cry. This is result desired.
 - A. To unrepentent -- God is a "lion"
 - B. To repentent -- God is the "rain"
3. Chapter 6:4-13 God probes Israel's wounds
 - A. Note the metaphors and similes:
 - a. 6:4 Goodness is as a morning cloud and as the early dew
 - b. 7:4 as oven heated by the baker
 - 8 as a cake not turned
 - 11 as a silly dove (Egypt-Assyria)
 - 12 as fowls caught in a net
 - c. 8:7 as a plant without stalk or yield.
 - 9 as a wild ass alone by himself
 - d. 10:1 as an empty vine
 - 11 as a heifer that is taught
 - 12 as a fallow field
 - e. 12:1 as one who feedeth on wind
4. Chapter 14:1-3 Prophet's final appeal
5. Israel's final restoration. 14:4-9; accomplished in a spiritual sense through the church.

III. What did God seek to accomplish through Hosea?

1. Make Israel aware of her true condition
2. Warn her of the consequences of her course
3. Bring Israel to repentance if possible
4. Indicate God's willingness to forgive and restore
5. Manifest the righteousness of God's dealing with Israel

IV. How did God seek to accomplish this?

1. Reveal the nature or Israel's sin.
 - A. Sin against the love and benevolence of God.
 - a. Satan has always attacked in this way
 - (1) Eve in Eden
 - (2) Israel in wilderness
 - (3) Gomer felt to gratitude Hosea 1:8
 - (4) Israel had turned to Baal
 - b. Failed only with Christ in wilderness.
 - B. Mistook blessings and freedom of God's love as a license to sin.
 - C. Failed to reciprocate God's love
 - a. Hosea loved Gomer
 - b. Hosea 11:1 "When Israel was a child then I loved him."
 - c. Love does not compel but beseeches
 - D. Had forsaken God and turned to other lovers
 - a. Idols
 - b. Assyria and Egypt
2. Her conduct had:
 - A. Separated her from God
 - a. Hosea-Gomer
 - b. God-Israel 6:15 Face hidden
 - B. Destroyed her righteous character
 - C. Would lead her into captivity
3. He hoped to bring them to repentance by:
 - A. Reminding them of his love and care for them.
 - a. Love begets love
 - b. Gomer remembered
4. God's willingness to forgive seen in:
 - A. Hosea's forgiveness of Gomer--Think of how difficult it must have been.
 - B. God's promises
 - a. To Israel
 - b. To spiritual Israel. 3:5.
5. God's righteousness is shown by:
 - A. They were responsible for their condition
 - B. They had rejected God's mercy

HIGHLIGHTS FROM HOSEA

Introduction:

1. "Hosea" means "salvation".
2. Time of prophecy from 750-725 B. C. during reign of Jereboam II. (Hos. 1:1; Compare 2 Kings 14-17 for background.)
3. The state of the Northern Kingdom. Review history, giving special attention to the "sin of Jereboam the son of Nebat."
4. Hosea is the prophet of love, the John of the Old Testament. He was the "home missionary" while Jonah was the "foreign missionary".
5. Hosea's Book is the History of the Decline and Fall of the Northern Kingdom.

I. THE MESSENGER--HIS PREPARATION (Chapters 1-3). *2nd reading of a prophet*

1. Commanded to marry a "sacred (?) harlot", which he does marrying Gomer.
2. Children born: Jezreël (Cf. 2 Kings 10:1-4.) Loruhamah (not obtained mercy); Loammi (not my people.) Hosea's wife has played the harlot again and he doesn't believe the last two children are his.
3. She either deserts husband and children or is cast off.
4. Hosea finds her in the slave market. Not lovely as once she was, but his love has not died. He buys her for thirty shekles of silver--half in cash, half in barley, and takes her home.
5. This used as analogy of God's relation to Israel and her apostacy.
6. Hosea "did not merely teach, but incarnated the redeeming love of God"-- (J. A. Brewer, Annotated Bible.)

II. THE MESSAGE--HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CHAPTERS SHOWING THEIR SIN (Chapters 4-13.) Their apostacy caused by:

1. Ignorance. (4:1-6; Cf. v. 9--preachers are ignorant, v. 11.)
2. Pride. (5:5, Following man's command, v. 11, rejected God's king, priesthood, feastdays, law and in this God himself! Cf. creeds, manuals etc. Ignorance in the church. What is wrong?)
3. Instability. (6:4, many are like this in the church--start out fine, but end up badly. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:58, etc.)
4. Worldiness. (7:8, churches and preachers today "mix with denominationalism" in some instances: Illustration of calling on to pray. Rom. 16:17-18.)
5. Transgression. (8:1, especially refers to Ex. 19:5. Have we broken our marriage vows to God? James 4:4, footnote.)
6. Corruption. (9:9, cf. the type sin committed in heathen worship. Col. 2.)
7. Divided Affections. (7:2; Cf. 1 Jno. 2:15-17; James 4:4 etc.)
8. Backsliding. (11:7; Today, Jno. 6:66-68; 2 Tim. 4:10; "bent"--impaled.)
9. Oppression. (12:7--followed practices of evil Canaanites, unfair. Today?)
10. Abandon. (13:1-2, sin more and more--worse and worse. 2Tim. 3:19-12.)

CONCLUSION:

1. Three things expected of Israel: (1) to know the Lord, (2) love the Lord, (3) turn to the Lord.
2. When this properly done God says, "I will heal their backsliding I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him."
3. Hosea is one of the grandest books of the Bible, showing the justice, righteousness and love of God.
4. Some thirty direct and indirect quotations from Hosea are found in the New Testament.

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HOSEA, JOEL, AND AMOS

Introduction:

1. We have come to the final books of the Old Testament, the Minor Prophets.
 - a. In the Hebrew Bible, these books are counted as one and given the collective name "The Twelve."
 - b. They are "minor" only in their relative length.
2. Seven of these prophets delivered their primary messages to Judah, two (i.e., Amos and Hosea) to Israel, two (i.e., Jonah and Nahum) to Nineveh, and one (i.e., Obadiah) to Edom.
3. The books are not in strict chronological order.
 - a. As we study them in groups of three, we will treat them in order of composition so as to fit their messages into a historical context.
 - b. How they came to be in their present order is unknown to us.
4. The three prophets whose writings concern us in this lesson were among the earliest of the writing prophets. Cf. p. 84 of these notes.

Body of the Lesson:

I. **Background to Hosea, Joel, and Amos.**

- A. Joel is nowhere dated in terms of a king's reign or a historical event whose date is known to us.
 1. There is good reason to view it as an early work.
 - a. The enemies of the Jews named in the book (i.e., Philistia, Edom, Egypt, and Phoenicia) are those of the pre-exilic time.
 - b. Its early place in the sequence of prophetic books likely indicates that Jewish tradition counted it an ancient document.
 2. Joel was from Judah and prophesied to his own countrymen. Joel 3:1; cf. 2:15,23,32.
 3. This book has been called a "literary gem" because of its fluent and polished style.
 4. A terrible locust plague and drought gave the occasion for Joel's prophecy. Joel 1:2,17-20.
 5. We remember Joel as the Prophet of Pentecost because of 2:28-32. Cf. Acts 2:17-21.
- B. Amos was a native of Judah whose principal task was to prophesy to the Northern Kingdom.
 1. The kings mentioned in Amos 1:1 date his ministry at ca. 760-750 B.C.
 2. His call to a prophetic work is most interesting. Amos 7:14-15.
 - a. He had no background in the prophetic or priestly line.
 - b. God called a righteous man from a humble occupation to serve as a bold preacher of reform.
 3. The national prosperity of Israel was at its peak in Amos' day and had generated spiritual idleness and national decay. Amos 6:1-6.

4. We remember Amos as the Prophet of Social Justice.
- C. Hosea has the distinction of being the only writing prophet from the Northern Kingdom.
 1. He preached to his own people for half a century or more, ca. 760-710. Hos. 1:1.
 2. He characteristically refers to Israel by the name of its largest tribe, Ephraim. Hos. 4:17; 5:3,5, etc.
 3. Hosea's ministry is set against the background of a terribly tragic family life. Hos. 1-3.
 - a. His wife forsook him and committed adultery with many lovers.
 - b. He continued to love her and eventually bought her back out of slavery.
 4. His experiences with Gomer illustrated God's relationship with Israel.
 5. We remember Hosea as the Prophet of Love.

II. *The Message of Hosea, Joel, and Amos.*

- A. Allowing for particular differences in their settings, audiences, and topics, we may say that *the common message of these books is faithlessness, repentance, and restoration.*
- B. Each prophet called attention to the faithlessness of his hearers before the holy God of heaven.
 1. Joel assumes their sinfulness and warns of the "day of the Lord" coming to Judah. Joel 1:15; 2:1-2.
 2. Amos warned of the same sort of day in Israel and cataloged specific sins leading to it. Amos 5:18-20; cf. 2:6-8.
 3. Hosea accused the whole nation of Israel of spiritual adultery. Hos. 4:1-19.
- C. Each pleaded for genuine repentance.
 1. Write Joel 2:12-13a _____

 2. Write Amos 5:15a _____

 3. Write Hos. 10:12b _____

- D. Each holds out the promise of restoration for those who will repent.
 1. Joel promised deliverance and prosperity. Joel 2:18-27.
 2. Amos looked beyond Israel's impending destruction to blessings the Messiah would bring. Amos 9:11-15.
 3. Hosea emphasized God's willingness to forgive his people. Hos. 11-14.

III. *Major Themes and/or Issues in Hosea, Joel, and Amos.*

- A. The day of the Lord.
 1. This is an important motif which runs through the prophetic books. Isa. 2:12f; Ezek. 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1,11; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:7,14; Zech. 14:1.

2. The expression is part of the biblical doctrine of last things (i.e., eschatology) in both testaments.
 3. In the Old Testament, it is that day when a nation receives its just due for sin.
 - a. There was no one specific day on which this would occur for all nations.
 - b. Each was judged at a time chosen by God.
 4. The day of the Lord was not only for Israel and Judah but also Babylon (Isa. 13:6), Egypt (Jer. 46:10), and other nations (Joel 3:14).
 5. The ultimate day of the Lord, foreshadowed by all other times of judgment in history, is the final Judgment before Christ. Cf. 2 Pet. 3:10-12.
- B. Spiritual adultery.
1. One of the most powerful figures of sin in all of Scripture is in Hosea: infidelity to divine love.
 2. God's relationship to Old Testament Israel was frequently symbolized as a husband-wife relationship. Isa. 62:5; Jer. 3:14.
 3. Thus it was appropriate to represent the nation's sins—especially idolatry—as adultery. Hos. 4:12-13a.
 4. This fundamental unfaithfulness to their covenant with God lay at the root of Israel's other sins. Hos. 4:13b-19.
 5. The New Testament warns us about sinning against God's love. Jas. 4:4; cf. Eph. 5:22-33.
- C. The social conscience of the people of God.
1. Amos was a fiery prophet who evaluated people's religion through their conduct in society.
 - a. Note the sins condemned among Israel's neighbors. Amos 1:1-2:3.
 - b. The rulers of Israel were denounced as thieves, and their wives were caricatured unmercifully. Amos 3:9-4:3.
 - c. Abuse of the poor in the land was denounced severely. Amos 5:10-12.
 2. The brother of Jesus had similar things to say in New Testament times. Jas. 5:1-6.
 3. In recent decades, liberal religious groups have abandoned the Bible for social activism; over the same period, conservative people have often defended the Bible and neglected the poor, oppressed, imprisoned, and helpless.
 4. True religion demands sensitivity to social issues.
 - a. Abortion should not be abandoned to the Catholic Church as its social issue.
 - b. The plight of the elderly must not be left to federal agencies for solution.
 - c. Family disintegration is a concern for Christians before it is the responsibility of psychologists.
 5. Write 1 John 4:20b _____
-

- D. The costliness of repentance.
 1. These prophets all stress the urgency and difficulty of genuine repentance. Cf. Joel 2:13a.
 2. Repentance always involves three very hard things.
 - a. Giving up evil. Acts 19:18-19.
 - b. Giving in to the Lord's commands. Acts 2:38.
 - c. Giving way to heaven's purpose for your life. Rom. 12:1-2.
 3. Thus it is the hardest requirement of salvation.

IV. *A Reader's Guide to Hosea, Joel, and Amos.*

A. The Book of Hosea.

This book begins with an account of Gomer's unfaithfulness to Hosea (1:1-11). She symbolized Israel's unfaithfulness, and the names of her three children by Hosea expressed God's judgment of the nation: Jezreel = scattered by God, Loruhamah = not pitied, and Loammi = not my people. Details of Gomer's adultery are given (2:1-13), and her restoration to Hosea is described (2:14-3:5).

The remainder of the book is a direct application of the Word of God to Israel. The nation is indicted for its many sins (4:1-7:16) and told of the punishment which was to come (8:1-10:15). There was still hope, however, for God's love for the nation was still real (11:1-14:9).

B. The Book of Joel.

Joel describes the terror of a great locust plague of Judah (1:1-20) which foreshadowed the day of the Lord for that nation (2:1-11). Thus he pleaded for repentance (2:12-17) and looked to the blessings which would follow from it (2:18-27). He closes with God's promise to bless mankind through the outpouring of his Spirit (2:28-32). The great blessings to result from that event are described prophetically (3:1-21).

C. The Book of Amos.

Calling them by their capital cities, Amos announces God's judgments against Israel's neighbors (1:1-2:3). He then turns to Judah (2:4-5) and Israel (2:6-16). Details about Israel's specific sins and its impending judgment are related (3:1-6:14).

Amos was then given five visions of the coming judgment of Israel: the locust plague (7:1-3), the devouring fire (7:4-6), the plumb line (7:7-9), a basket of summer fruit (8:1-14), and the altar (9:1-10). In the course of the visions, Amaziah's opposition to Amos at Bethel is related (7:10-17). The book closes with a glimpse of the splendor of the Messiah's coming kingdom (9:11-15).

Conclusion:

1. Notice how the messages of these prophets grew out of their personal experiences and reflected their different personalities.
2. God's ability to use all types of people to his glory is amazing—and consoling.

READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT LESSON

Maxi Assignment: The Books of Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah

Mini Assignment: The Books of Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah

EZEKIEL

By Dan Jones

When God called Ezekiel to his prophetic office, the Babylonian captivity was well underway. Along with king Jehoiachin and others, Ezekiel was a part of the second deportation of the Southern Kingdom of Israel into Babylon. According to 1:1-2 Ezekiel was called "in the thirtieth year" (probably meaning that Ezekiel was thirty years of age) and in the "fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity." He saw "visions of God" (1:1) and was told that he was being sent to the rebellious, sinful, impudent and stiffhearted children of Israel and was to say unto them, "Thus saith the Lord God" (2:3-4).

Ezekiel's message was basically twofold consisting of both doom and hope. The captivity of the children of Israel would continue for the divinely appointed period of time (seventy years as prophesied by Jeremiah). The book stresses the fact that this captivity was the punishment for their sins and that Jerusalem would be destroyed. Yet it offers hope for the return of a remnant (14:22) and envisions the unity, peace and redemption that ultimately would be enjoyed under "David" as shepherd and king (34:23-24; 37:24-25). The promise of a remnant involves the preserving of the seed line through which the Savior would come. "David" is a reference to the Messiah Himself who was to be of the seed of David (II Sam. 7:12-13; Isa. 11:1-5; Acts 2:25-36), the one Shepherd that God would send to bless all mankind (cf. John 10:16).

The book of Ezekiel employs figurative and symbolic language, parables and allegories in order to reveal God's message through the prophet and to the children of Israel. It is literally full of lessons and principles that need to be learned and applied even today (Rom. 15:4). Although portions of the book are difficult to understand and require a great deal of close, careful study, it also contains many lessons that are readily perceived and easily grasped. The following few are submitted for the serious consideration, contemplation and profit of all who read.

As noted earlier, Ezekiel was told that when he spoke to the people he was to say, "Thus saith the Lord God" (2:4;

3:27). This emphasizes the all-important truth that God's Word is to be taught and preached "as is" without addition, subtraction or modification of any sort. While teaching involves explaining the Scriptures or "giving the sense" thereof (Neh. 8:8), man cannot improve or enhance the will of God. He should not try to do so and he is condemned if he does try (Gal. 1:8-9; Rev. 22:18-19). He must speak "as the oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11). This same principle is found in God's instruction to the prophet Jonah when he was told to go to Nineveh and "preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee" (Jonah 3:2).

O how many there are, especially preachers, who need to give heed to this lesson today! Yes, this means preachers in denominational churches. But it also includes many preachers, elders and members within the churches of Christ. It includes those who err by preaching and promoting doctrines contrary to the gospel of Christ (II Tim. 4:3-4; Rom. 16:17-18), those who fellowship, support and endorse false teachers (II John 9-11; Eph. 5:11), those who ignore and neglect portions of truth they consider unpleasant, unpopular or controversial (Acts 20:20, 26-27) and even those who make little or no effort to live and practice the truths they acknowledge and preach (Phil. 1:27; I Tim. 4:12).

In preaching the pure word of God, the faithful proclaimer is not to be afraid of those who hate and reject the truth. Rather, truth is to be preached whether those who are taught are willing to listen or not (Ezek. 2:6-7; 3:27; II Tim. 4:1-2). As long as fidelity to truth is maintained, there is every reason to be courageous and no reason to be fearful of men (Josh. 1:5-9; Acts 18:9-10; I Pet. 3:14; Heb. 13:5-6). Fear should only be directed toward the One who can and will destroy the disobedient eternally (Matt. 10:28; II Thess. 1:7-9).

Today many shy away from "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15) lest, God forbid, they hurt someone's feelings or make someone mad. Granted, it is not our intention and aim to offend, but the truth offends those who do not love it with all their heart. It has always been this

way and always will be! Our Lord did not seek to offend anyone, yet when He was informed that the Pharisees were offended by His teaching (Matt. 15:12) He did not rush to apologize for the truth. Rather He said, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14). It is far better to face those who do not appreciate sound teaching now, than to face the Lord in judgment knowing that we failed to follow His commands. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

Further, a desire to adhere faithfully to the revealed will of God should be coupled with an acute awareness of the obligation one has to teach and warn others. God makes personal responsibility for sin crystal clear, but He makes it just as clear that Ezekiel will be held accountable for warning, admonishing, exhorting and encouraging the people to turn from sin and to righteousness. If he fails to "sound the trumpet" their blood will be upon his hands (Ezek. 3:17-21; 33:1-9). Likewise, we should feel compelled to teach the truth (I Cor. 9:16) and should realize that we have a debt to pay with regard to those who are lost and in need of the saving gospel (Rom. 1:14-16). Like Paul, we should have a deep passion for the souls of men (Rom. 9:1-3) and should earnestly desire, pray for and labor for their salvation (Rom. 10:1).

Ezekiel served faithfully as priest during an extremely difficult period in the history of Israel. Truly he exemplified his name which means "Jehovah strengthens". What was true then is true now—it takes strong, stouthearted men and women of faith to carry out the Lord's will; people who are neither afraid nor ashamed to stand firmly upon, humbly follow and boldly proclaim God's precious Word. If this we will do, we will be blessed both now and in eternity (Mark 10:30; I Tim. 4:8). God will be with us and help us. As David said:

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from which cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. (Ps. 121:1-2)

OBSERVATIONS FROM HOSEA

By David S. Hill

The prophet Hosea, the son of Beeri, was a minister to Israel in the last days of freedom before the siege of Israel and Babylonian captivity. He was at work in Israel during the reign of King Uzziah (767-739 B.C.) through King Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.). The name Hosea means "salvation" and should Israel have listened to Hosea who was carrying the words of the Lord, they could have been saved. The book of Hosea parallels the historical record found in II Kings 15-16 and II Chronicles 26-28.

The word of the Lord to Hosea begins with what should be a most beautiful and exciting time of life for a young man like Hosea. It was time for him to be married and Solomon the inspired writer of Proverbs said, "rejoice with the wife of thy youth" (Prov. 5:18). God intended for man and woman to come together in the beauty of marriage and enjoy a special relationship that would last a lifetime (Matt. 19:1-9). But Hosea will not enjoy the special relationship which God had planned because he has set his eyes on a "wife of whoredoms" (1:2). Because his heart is inclined that way God says, "Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms." Please note that God tells him to take a wife of whoredoms, but that could not be God's wish for Hosea or any man (Prov. 5). The priests were strictly commanded not to marry a whore (Lev. 21:7). The Proverb writer said that "by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread" (Prov. 6:26). Israel had been warned many times of the corruption brought on by whoredom and yet Hosea's heart was set on Gomer. A significant comparison is seen in verse two of chapter one: Hosea represents what was going on in all the land. So what should have been a happy time for Hosea and Israel was a sad, bleak time because of sin.

When reading the book of Hosea one can see that God has been cheated on in His marriage to Israel. Gomer did commit adultery and cheated on Hosea (2:2-23) just as Israel had done to God. Hosea is willing to buy her love and affection back (ch.3), but her heart is not with him. God would give Israel every precious thing, yet she would not return from her whoredom with a change of heart. After being taken captive without a king and without a prince, Israel will eventually be prepared to turn her heart back to the Lord (3:5).

But why and how could such a thing happen? The key verse of the book tells us why: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4:6). Israel was not approved unto God because they left His Word and a knowledge of His laws. In Hosea 6:6 God said, "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice; and knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." A ceasing to retain God in one's knowledge will lead to every kind of evil (Rom. 1:28). This is the exact thing that was found in Rome in the New Testament and the people were "without natural affection" (Rom. 1:31). Could it be that we in America know this same situation? What would possess a woman to kill her unborn child in abortion but a heart devoid of God and a knowledge of His Word? What would allow men and women to run for public office in the United States of America and openly promote homosexuality and homosexual rights, moreover be elected with such an unclean, corrupt platform, but a people whose hearts are devoid of God and a knowledge of Him? How could it be a shock to anyone that a president would blatantly lie when all along he has promoted positions such as abortion and homosexuality which are as debased and unnatural as can be? When anyone or any nation ceases to retain God in their

knowledge and refuses His longsuffering and grace, destruction is at the door. Hosea's record of Israel reveals this clearly.

Hosea is a sad book. Many today say, "Be positive! We don't like or need negative preaching and teaching." Yet God wrote some of the most negative books to be found anywhere. Why? Because Israel needed to know and see how bad they really were in the sight of God. God said, "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor" (9:1). How graphic, how negative, but how true it was. Israel could not see her own eminent destruction because sin and whoredom had blinded her eyes. In chapter 14 of the book of Hosea God's longsuffering could not be clearer. He painted the sad picture of Israel's condition throughout the book but ends with the earnest plea, "O Israel return unto the Lord thy God." Notice that if they will just turn unto the Lord and confess their iniquity God will forgive, forget and bless them. But, sadly the Father's faithful plea was not heard.

In closing Hosea brings a couple of other Bible references to mind. First is the statement by Paul in II Corinthians 6:14: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Also contained in that same verse is the question "what fellowship has light with darkness?" Finally there is this question: what do members of Christ have in common with harlotry? (I Cor. 6:15-20). When one studies the book of Hosea, it's easy to see that even though 2,600 years have gone by man hasn't changed. His heart seems to be set on doing evil and God will let it happen. The sad thing is that an awful price has already been paid and is yet to be paid for unforgiven sin. The Lord will forgive if we will turn to Him.

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THE MINOR PROPHETS - HOSEA

Lesson Two

INTRODUCTION:

5

1. Read 2 Kings 14 - 17 as a background to the book of Hosea.
2. Read the book of Hosea.
3. "The book of Hosea stands first among the writings of the 'Minor Prophets,' not because it was thought to be the earliest (for of this there is no proof), but because it is the longest." (Cheyne).
4. Let's consider:

DISCUSSION:

I. SOME VITAL FACTS ABOUT HOSEA.

- A. Hosea prophesied to the Northern Kingdom called Israel or Ephraim.
 1. "He has the distinction of being the only writing prophet of the Northern Kingdom." (Lewis).
 2. He prophesied during the darkest period of the kingdom of Israel.
- B. Hosea seems to have prophesied in the years following 746 B.C., possibly 745 B.C. to 725 B.C. This was shortly after the time of Amos.
- C. Hosea means "God is salvation" or "Deliverance." The core and content of his message is the plea of a "return" to God, a word that is used 15 times in the book.
- D. Hosea is a walking example of the lesson he presents. He marries an adulterous woman and to this union three children are born and each is given a name which is part of the prophet's preaching
 1. Jezreel. "God scatters" which was a threat to the reigning house. Also element of hope. (Hosea 1:11; 2:22,23).
 2. Loruhamah. "Not pitied" is a threat that God will not pity and forgive the house of Israel.
 3. Loammi. "Not my people" is the threat of a broken relationship.

II. GOD'S REVELATION OF THEIR CONDITION AND CALL TO REPENTANCE.

- A. During the reign of Jereboam II, Israel reached a great state of prosperity, but they drifted into an easy, careless life, which led to their destruction.
- B. George L. Robinson lists six specific sins of which they were guilty:
 1. Lack of knowledge. Hos. 4:6, 11.
 2. Pride. y:4.
 3. Instability. 6:4.
 4. Worldliness. 7:8.
 5. Backsliding. 11:7.
 6. Idolatry. 13:2.
- C. Hosea lists some serious faults present in Israel.
 1. Their religion consisted of outward forms at the expense of inward reality. 6:6.
 - a. The "multiplication of altars and sacrifices were not pleasing to God as long as it was not accompanied by the proper attitudes. The religious hypocrisy of Hosea's day was patent to God..." (Schultz)
 - b. "It is impossible to express goodness and knowledge apart from obedience to the commands of God, yet it is possible to obey outward forms and fail to please God because of the corruptness of the heart." (Ellis).
 - c. God desires goodness, mercy and knowledge.
 2. They had transgressed or broken covenant with God. 6:7). It was wilfully broken by man.
 3. They were guilty of murder. (6:8) "Gilead" is the name of a district and "city" is used here in the sense that the whole land was full of evildoers. "Political and social corruptness led to murder and bloodshed throughout the land."

4. The priests, the leaders of the people, had become robbers. (6:9)
5. They were guilty of whoredom or "spiritual adultery." (6:10) They had joined with other nations and forsaken God. They revered the calves of Samaria. (8:5; 10:5f)
6. There was international intrigue. Acting like a silly dove that will be caught Israel first seeks help from Assyria and then Egypt, not realizing that God was their help.
7. Israel trusted in their great military might to save them instead of trusting in God. (10:13).

III. SOME THOUGHTS FROM HOSEA IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

- A. The expression "not my people." (2:23; 1:10) appears in Romans 9:25,26 and the thought in 1 Pet. 2:10. The people who were not his people but were to become his people were the Gentiles.
- B. In Hosea 6:6, we read, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." Jesus used this statement to rebuke "those who found fault because he had mercy on sinners and because his disciples ate grain on the Sabbath."
- C. In Hosea 11:1, we read, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." This refers to the exodus experience of Israel out of Egypt, but Matthew's application of the passage "to the experience of Jesus makes it quite clear that Matthew understands the word 'fulfill' to include typical fulfillment." (Lewis).

THE MINOR PROPHETS - HOSEA QUESTIONS ON LESSON 2

DISCUSSION AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS - GIVE SCRIPTURE

1. When did Hosea write? 746 B.C. What are the background scriptures to Hosea? 2 Kgs. 14-17
2. Who was Hosea's father? Beeri - 1:1
3. Who was Hosea's wife? Gomer
4. Give Hosea's children's names and the meaning of each:
 - a. Jezreel - God scatters
 - b. Lorhamah - Not pitied
 - c. Loami - not my people
5. What did Hosea's wife become after he married her? An adulteress
(In the same manner Israel had forsaken God and followed other nations).
6. Hosea 2:23 is quoted in Romans 9:25 and referred to what people? the Gentiles
7. Hosea later found his wife sold in the common market and bought her back for how much? 15 pieces of silver, Homer of Barley + 1/2 homer of barley
8. God had a controversy with Israel because he did not find what three things in the land? a. Truth b. mercy c. Knowledge

9. Why did God say his people are destroyed? Lack of knowledge 4:6
10. What two things did God desire more than sacrifice and burnt offerings?
 a. Mercy b. Knowledge 6:6
11. What men had become as a "troop of robbers?" the priests 6:8-9
12. Who did God say would "come as an eagle against" Israel because they had transgressed his covenant? (cf. 5:13) Assyria 5:13
13. God said Israel hath "sown the wind" but shall reap the whirlwind - 8:7
14. What did God do for Israel when yet a child? Loved him and called him out of Egypt - 11:1
15. What did God say his people were bent on doing? Backsliding - 11:7
16. Where did God tell Israel her help was to be found? God - 12:6
17. Name some evil characteristics of Israel. (The evil characteristic is not necessarily named in the verse, but it may just be described.)
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. Hosea 4:6 <u>ignorance</u> | e. Hosea 9:9 <u>Corrupted</u> |
| b. Hosea 5:5 <u>Pride</u> | f. Hosea 11:7 <u>Backsliding</u> |
| c. Hosea 7:8 <u>Divided heart</u> | g. Hosea 12:7 <u>Deceit</u> |
| d. Hosea 8:1 <u>Transgressed</u> | h. Hosea 13:2 <u>Idolatry</u> |
18. List as many sins as you can from the following verses of which Israel was guilty:
 (Hosea 4:2, 10, 11, 14; 5:2, 7; 6:9) Swearing, lying, stealing, adultery, killing, wine, whores, revolt, Treachery, robbers
19. Throughout this book God said Israel or Ephraim is like or as several things. See how many you can find. One example given.
- | |
|---|
| a. "Israel slideth back" - "as a backsliding heifer" 4:16 |
| b. "for your goodness is" - <u>as a morning cloud - 6:4</u> |
| c. "I found Israel like" - <u>grapes in the wilderness - 9:10</u> |
| d. "Ephraim also is like" - <u>a silly dove 7:11</u> |
| e. "As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like" - <u>a bird - 9:11</u> |
| f. "And Ephraim is as" - <u>an heifer that is taught</u> |
20. Despite Israel's many sins God still pleaded with them to do what? repent

TRUE OR FALSE

1. T Israel was guilty of spiritual adultery by joining with other nations.
2. T Hosea buying his wife back was a picture of God buying Israel back.
3. T Israel had forgotten the law of God.
4. T The people were like the priests who were corrupt.
5. T God said he would be unto Ephraim as a moth. 5:12
6. T God described Ephraim as a "cake not turned." 7:8
7. T The expression "Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart" means without understanding.
8. F Ephraim did not make many altars.
9. F The "day of visitation" in 9:7 referred to the final judgment day.
10. T Despite all that Israel had done it grieved God to give her up.

VITAL LESSONS FOR OUR DAY.

1. Man's proper relationship with God is to know God - "no mere intellectual knowledge, but is rather an intimate relationship that comes by living with and for him and must be persistently pursued." (Lewis)
2. Disloyalty to God is vividly pictured as "spiritual adultery."
3. God's great love for us is amazing despite our weakness and sins.

The Historical Background and Conditions During Hosea's prophecy – Kings of Judah

A. Uzziah – King of Judah – 52 Years

1. Read from II Chronicles 26:1-23.
2. Read from Background of Isaiah.

B. Jotham – King of Judah – 16 Years (740-735 B.C.).

1. He accomplished much.
2. His success explained in II Chronicles 27:6.

C. Ahaz – King of Judah – 16 years (735-715 B.C.).

1. Wicked
2. II Chronicles 28:1 ff
3. II Kings 16:5-10
4. II Kings 17:5, 6, 7-9, 13, 14

Israel – Kings

A. Jereboam II – King of Israel – 41 years

1. Evil king, but a very capable man.
2. Jonah prophesied during this time.

B. Zachariah – Son of Jereboam – Killed by Shallum – Reign 6 months (II Kings 15:8-11).

C. Shallum – Reign 1 month – Killed by Menahem – II Kings 15:14.

D. Menahem – Reign 10 years – Paid Paul, king of Assyria, 1,000 talents of silver.

E. Pekahiah – His son reigned 2 years – He was killed by Pekah, army captain – II Kings 15:23-25.

F. Pekah – Reign 20 years – Killed by Hoshea – II Kings 15:27-31.

Dead Sea Scrolls:

1. Cave 1 – Full text and commentary on Habakkuk 1 and 2 as well as fragments of Hosea and Micah.
2. Cave 2 – Seraps of Jonah.
3. Cave 4 – Had parts of all minor prophets except Obadiah, Habakkuk and Haggai – Minor Commentaries on Hosea and Nahum.
4. Other caves – remainder of books at least fragments found.
5. Have them draw period and place dates and events.

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The Agony of Unrequited Love

Man and woman were designed for one another. There is no greater relationship on earth than the love shared by a devoted husband and wife. The fact is, the marriage union is the only relationship wherein man and woman have the divine authorization for physical intimacy (Gen. 2:24).

Humanity has been intrigued with “love stories” since the commencement of history. Many of these, unfortunately, have been marred by immorality. Nonetheless, passionate romances intrigue.

Antony and Cleopatra, Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Abelard and Heloise, Brown-ing and Barrett (“How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.”) – the list is long and diverse.

But the greatest love saga of all time lies within the Old Testament. It involved God’s prophet, Hosea. As one Old Testament scholar has observed, “In all the world’s literature there is no record of human love like that of Hosea” (Robinson, 21).

Historical Background

A little more than 900 years before the Savior’s birth, the Hebrew nation split. In the northern region of Canaan, with a capital at Samaria and embracing ten tribes, there arose a faction known as “the kingdom of Israel.” The regime in the south, principally with two tribes and headquarters at Jerusalem, stood apart as “the kingdom of Judah.” Each regime had its own line of kings, and frequently there was tension and bitterness between these antagonistic brethren.

The northern kingdom commenced in the throes of apostasy, when Jeroboam, son

of Nebat, started a “denomination” involving “calf worship,” with idols erected in Bethel and Dan (see 1 Kgs. 12:25-33). Thus was there accelerated a decline in the north that would end in disaster 210 years later, with the Assyrian invasion (722/21 B.C.).

Five of Jehovah’s prophets were associated with the northern kingdom. Jonah was a missionary sent to preach to Nineveh. Elijah and Elisha rebuked the idolatry of the homeland, but neither produced any written work. Amos, from the southern kingdom, warned of the fall that would come to Israel if she failed to mend her ways. Hosea was the solitary writing prophet of the north.

Hosea (whose name signifies “salvation”) did his prophetic work at some point within the administration of Jeroboam II (c. 782-753 B.C.). His regime was characterized by successful military conquests and great material prosperity. Yet, it was marred by gross idolatry and indulgence of the vilest sort. The writings of both Amos and Hosea paint a stark portrait of this degenerating nation that edged toward the brink of destruction, and that eventually would fall to the brutal Assyrians.

Amos described how the poor were oppressed while the rich grew fat. Drunkenness and sexual abuse was rampant. Idolatry was practiced profusely and openly. Those who sought to be faithful were persecuted (Am. 2:6-12).

Hosea’s message compliments that of Amos. The people of the northern kingdom were ignorant of God’s truth (4:6), and their arrogant pride was abominable (5:5). Hence, Jehovah would “withdraw” his fellowship from them (5:6). The nation was fickle, on

and off, like a morning cloud or evaporating dew (6:4). Their worship was hypocritical; sacrifices were offered, but they were void of common goodness and were intertwined with idolatrous ceremonialism (6:6; 13:2). They were a “deeply corrupted” people (9:9). The nation fraternized with the pagans; they were rotting, yet were wholly unaware of their disease (7:8-9). Israel had set her mind toward a departure from the true God (11:7).

Samaria was located some 35 miles north of Jerusalem. The city had been founded about a hundred years before Hosea’s time. A number of archaeological excavations have been carried out at the site of the ancient city. One scholar, Professor Howard Vos, has observed that these explorations “proved to be particularly fruitful in illuminating and confirming the biblical record” (Vos, 246).

For example, numerous pottery fragments were found with inscriptions of names thereon. Not a few of these had “Baal” as a compound designation (cf. Baal-Shalishah - 2 Kgs. 4:42), demonstrating how deeply idolatry had infiltrated the nation. Jezebel, Ahab’s ungodly wife, had been a missionary for evil in the land.

Also the luxury of the era has been well illustrated by the palace with its walls of inlaid ivory, and remnants of furniture with carved ivory adornment. This cannot but remind the Bible student of Amos’ rebuke of those who “lie on beds of ivory, and stretch themselves on their couches” (Am. 6:4; cf. 3:15; 1 Kgs. 22:39). Some of the ivory trinkets from Samaria, with replications of various false gods, may be seen in the British Museum (Mitchell, 54).

Hosea

Hosea was a country boy. This is evidenced by the frequent references to agricultural items (cf. 4:16; 8:7; 10:11, etc.). He was called by God to deliver a message of love and hope to a wayward people destined for severe punishment if they did not repent.

The first three chapters of the book are biographical and it is here that we learn something of the tragedy in the prophet's life that made him eminently qualified to function as a tender messenger on behalf of Jehovah, as the Lord sought to win back his ungodly "bride," the nation of Israel.

Hosea was selected by God for a most important mission. His task was: (a) to rebuke the nation for her sins; (b) to tenderly call the people back into a familial relationship with the Lord; and, (c) to warn of the impending destruction of the kingdom if Israel failed to respond. His ministry probably lasted more than twenty years. But the backdrop for his preaching was the heart-crushing experiences of his own marital situation.

The Marriage

Hosea married a woman whose name was Gomer. The controversial point about this event was the manner in which the prophet was instructed to enter the relationship. Here is the shocking command from God: "Go take unto you a wife of whoredom, and children of whoredom; for the land is committing great whoredom, departing from Jehovah" (1:2). What does this mean?

First, we must dismiss the view that the story of Hosea and his wife is but an allegory, and not based upon an historical situation, as liberal scholars commonly contend. This theory appears to be a convenient way of avoiding the difficulty embodied in the command.

Second, we cannot endorse the concept that the Lord required the prophet to go and marry a woman who already was a prostitute. There are several factors that tend to negate this view. (a) Such a command would make a mockery of the sacredness of marriage and reflect upon the holiness of God. Robinson, quoting A.B. Davidson, called this notion "absurd and monstrous" (20). (b) Such a circumstance would not parallel Jehovah's dealings with Israel; the nation had been faithful initially, but became corrupt, and thus was pled with to return to her loving Lord. (c) Had Hosea married a practicing harlot, he

would have attracted the scorn of his brethren and discredited himself as a prophet of the holy God.

It is better to take the language of verse 2 as an example of "prophetic prolepsis." This is a figure of speech, quite common in the scriptures, whereby the writer speaks of something that *will* happen as if it *already had occurred*. As Professor Kirkpatrick described it, "Gomer was as yet unstained when Hosea took her to be his wife. She is called a *wife* or *woman of whoredom* (1:2) not because she was already such, but because she proved to be such in her wedded life" (123). The prophet records the narrative for us "in the light in which he was led to see it in after days" (125).

Hosea loved Gomer with a depth that may be uncommon among men. She developed a "wild" streak – perhaps lured by the well-known sexual indulgences of the Baal religion. Under the influence of Jezebel, Baalism had invaded and saturated the northern kingdom (see 1 Kgs. 18:19).

Though Gomer forsook her devoted husband, saying, "I will go after my lovers" (v. 2:5), his love for her was unquenchable.

How many nights did the prophet lay awake, anxious for the fate of his wife? Was she walking the streets? Was she in a Baal orgy somewhere? His heart was shattered. Had the law been rigorously applied, she could have been executed. At the very least Hosea could have divorced her. But what would have been her plight, and that of their three children? Amazingly, the prophet's love overcame all other emotions.

Hosea went looking for his straying wife. She seems to have been sold as a sex slave, because he had to buy her back (3:2). But she was under strict obligation not to repeat her profligate conduct.

Hosea's Preaching

It was out of this background that Hosea's preaching took on a fervor more intense than it otherwise could have been. There was a startling parallel between Gomer's wanton infidelity, and that of the nation of Israel. Note the following points of comparison.

(1) Jehovah betrothed Israel unto himself as a man takes a wife, but there was the obligation of the nation to remain faithful to the sacred contract (2:19-20).

(2) Sadly, Israel became unfaithful. Decked with the jewelry of her prosperity, she pursued the "night life," frolicking in the

sensualism of the Baal cult (2:13). She ceased even to "know" her mate (4:6).

(3) But the Lord grieved over his wanton people. "How shall I give you up, O Ephraim? How shall I cast you off, Israel?" (11:8-9). Because the tribe of Ephraim was a leading influence in the northern kingdom, this name was used to represent the people. God would not deal with *his* bride, as a man ordinarily might (v. 9); his longsuffering reflected his love.

(4) Jehovah would happily receive his people back if they would but acknowledge their wrong and return to him. "Therefore return to your God; keep kindness and justice, and wait for your God continually" (12:6). The term "return" is found 15 times in the book.

The Tragic End

The Bible student is not privy to the latter days of Gomer, as piqued as his curiosity might be. But he is keenly aware of what happened to the kingdom of Israel. They were unmoved by the preaching of Hosea (and Amos), and dredged themselves deeper into apostasy, until the Lord was forced (by his own sense of holiness and justice) to deal with them.

The brutal Assyrians became a providential tool in the hand of the Almighty (cf. Isa. 10:5-7). During the rule of Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 B.C.), a number of Hebrews were taken captive (2 Kgs. 15:29; 16:7-9). A second reign of terror came in the days of Shalmaneser V (727-722) and Sargon II (722-705), as the northern kingdom was ravaged again. After a siege of 3 years, Samaria fell and, according to Assyrian records, 27,290 Israelites were taken into captivity (2 Kgs. 17:1-6; see Pritchard, 195).

Can we learn from this example? Can we not be touched with a realization of the love of God and Christ for us? (Rom. 8:37-39; Eph. 3:18-19)? Will it take a providential tragedy to awaken us? WJ

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Hosea's Wife and Children

God said take unto thee a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom; for the land doth commit great whoredom, departing from Jehovah (1:2). God knew in his infinite wisdom that the seeds of harlotry had been sown in Gomer, daughter of Diblaim, and examples all around her had so influenced her that she had become such. When Hosea married her, she was beautiful and pure, but, alas she partook of the habits of the people of her generation. This of course broke his heart. He loved his wife and truly desired her faithfulness. But that was the very purpose of God asking him to do such a thing. Israel had departed from God. They had one after gods of the Canaanites; El, Baal and Dagon. Their female goddesses were Asherah, Astarte, and Anath. Their worship was purely pagan in it's nature. It was connected with their farming. In order to produce fertility in man, beast, and crops in the field, they would conduct ritualistic acts of fornication, men with harlots and women with other men who were not their husbands. God made it known to Hosea that he would not punish Ephraim's daughters "when they play the harlot, nor your brides when they committ adultery: for the men themselves go apart with harlots, and they sacrifice with prostitutes; and the people that doth not understand shall be overthrown" (4:14). The brides committed adultery and daughters played the harlot under every green tree, the oaks, the poplars, and the terebinths, "because the shadow thereof is good" (4:13). They sacrificed upon the hills. Whoredom and wine had taken away their understanding (4:11).

This was the tragedy of it all: they were ignorant. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4:6). They rejected knowledge and this was why God had rejected them, and they would be no priest to him, they had forgotten the law of their God," "I wrote for Ephraim the 10,000 things of my law; but they are as a strange thing" (8:12). In his writing, Ephraim (the largest tribe representing Israel) was both a wife to God and a son. God had loved Israel when he was a child and "called my son out of Egypt" (11:1). God had taught Israel how to walk and had taken them on his arms, but they did not know that it was he who had healed them" (11:4).

Hosea also portrayed Israel as a wife to God. And that is the thrust of his writing. Jehovah wanted Israel to see how terrible their apostasy really was. They should have been able to see the bitterness and pain in his heart when Gomer played the harlot and bore the children of harlotry. They should have seen how he dearly loved her and, though she had grievously sinned and had broken their marital covenant, he was still forgiving and, according to God's instructions, he went again and loved Gomer who had become an adulteress (3:1).

The value of this illustration is in our ability to abhor Gomer's conduct. All sensitive people will. It is when we can sense the ugliness of her deeds that we can see the magnitude of Hosea's love and forgiveness.

Most men would say, "I would never have taken her back," and that is precisely the point - God's love is larger; His long-suffering is longer; and His mercy is matchless. If the love of a Hosea for a Gomer is astonishing, how much more the amazing grace of a Holy God toward a sinful world. If God could not love the unloveable, no man would have hope.

It is no accident that the Scriptures frequently employ the figure of adultery and prostitution to portray the ugliness of unfaithfulness to God (4:11,12; James 4:4).

The unfaithful wife sought lovers for what they give her (2:5). This is idolatry. All such coveting after is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). How God's heart is broken when His people leave Him in pursuit of things (job, house, boat, car, friends, recreation, prestige)!

She is presumptuous (2:7). She takes it for granted that she can go home when she wants. Psalms 19:13. She would be ungrateful (2:8). So all who accept God's goodness and refuse His service (Romans 2:4).

She would scorn his overtures of love (3:1). (Chapter 2:14 describes God's efforts to win back Israel's heart.) But the pure love of God is trampled in pursuit of illegitimate pleasures (2 Timothy 3:4).

But God cannot forgive the impenitent The marriage cannot be mended until the unfaithful one had repented (14:1).

Just as Gomer had for long astray from her rightful husband, even so Israel would for many years be without its true worship but would in the Messianic days return to "David their king, and shall come with fear unto Jehovah, and to his goodness in the latter days"(3:5). It was Hosea's privilege to announce to his people the wonderful love of God and the boundless mercy of God toward Israel and Judah. Even though Israel committed adultery, with their kingdom destroyed and the nation scattered (Jezreel); even though they would be without mercy (Loruhamah); and though they would not be God's people (loammi), the time would come when they would be gathered together, both Judah and Israel, and be sown to Jehovah (Jezreel), become God's people (Ammi), and obtain mercy (Ruhamah). This would be under the latter day David (the Messiah-Christ).

Scriptures to remember

Hosea 2:15. The valley of Achor as a door of hope.

Hosea 5:10. The princes of Judah have become like those who move a boundary. Job 22:15 Will you keep to the ancient path.

Hosea 7:8. Ephriam mixes himself with the nations; Ephriam has become a cake not turned.

Hosea 10:12. Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the Lord. Isaiah 55:6-11.

Hosea 12:13. By a prophet the Lord brought Israel from Egypt, And by a prophet he was kept.

Hosea 13:9 Israel you have destroyed yourself.

HOSEA

I. THE NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. The book is named for its author, the prophet Hosea.
- B. Hosea means “salvation” or “deliverance” and is from the same root as Joshua and the Greek form, Jesus.

II. THE PROPHET HOSEA

- A. It is generally thought that Hosea was a native of the North, possibly Samaria, but nothing is said of his early life or his home. His father, Beerai, is mentioned in 1:1.
- B. As Amos stressed the righteousness of God, Hosea stressed the love of God and his life mirrored his message.
- C. Hosea has been called “the weeping prophet” of Israel, just as Jeremiah was for Judah.

III. THE DATE OF THE WRITING OF THE BOOK

- A. Hosea prophesied during the reign of four kings in Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.
- B. He also prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel, as well as others not mentioned.
- C. His ministry is generally set at ca. 780-726 B.C., which would have been a rather long period of time for a prophet to prophesy.

IV. THE OCCASION FOR THE WRITING OF THE BOOK

- A. At this time, Israel was prospering outwardly but was decaying inwardly.
- B. Socially, religiously, morally, and politically, Israel was everything God did not want her to be.
 - 1. The word “whoredom” is used 16 times in the book to describe the condition of the nation.
 - 2. Israel’s catalogue of sins is given in such passages as 4:6,11; 5:5; 6:4,10; 7:8; 9:9-10; 11:6-8; 13:2.
 - 3. Nine stinging accusations are made by the prophet against Israel: 4:1; 4:4-11; 4:13-15; 5:1-2; 5:3-7; 6:4/10:2; 7:11; 12:8.
 - 4. Vivid figures are used to show the sins of which Israel was guilty: 3:1; 4:11; 4:16; 6:9; 7:4; 7:7; 7:8; 7:11; 7:16; 8:8; 8:9.
- C. Hosea’s efforts were designed to turn Israel back to God, and he is the first to compare the relationship of God and His people to a marriage relationship.
- D. Two ideas permeate Hosea’s message:
 - 1. God’s loving faithfulness to Israel, and
 - 2. Israel’s ingratitude and unfaithfulness to God.

V. A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

- A. Hosea and Unfaithful Gomer – Chapters 1-3

HOSEA - Lesson Two

Introduction:

1. Read 2 Kings 14 - 17 as a background to the book of Hosea.
2. Read the book of Hosea.
3. "The book of Hosea stands first among the writings of the 'Minor Prophets,' not because it was thought to be the earliest (for of this there is no proof), but because it is the longest." (Cheyne).
 - a. It has 197 verses.
 - b. Hosea is the prophet of love in the Old Testament.

Discussion:

I. Some vital facts about Hosea.

- A. Hosea prophesied to the Northern Kingdom called Israel or Ephraim.
 1. "He has the distinction of being the only writing prophet of the Northern Kingdom." (Lewis).
 2. He prophesied during the darkest period of the kingdom of Israel.
- B. Hosea seems to have prophesied in the years following 746 B.C., possibly 745 B.C. to 725 B.C. This was shortly after the time of Amos.
- C. Hosea means "God is salvation" or "Deliverance." The core and content of his message is the plea of a "return" to God, a word that is used 15 times in the book of Hosea.
- D. Hosea is a walking example of the lesson he presents. He marries an adulterous woman and to this union three children are born and each is given a name which is part of the prophet's preaching.
 1. Jezreel. "God scatters" which was a threat to the reigning house. Also element of hope. (Hosea 1:11; 2:22, 23)
 2. Loruhamah. "Not pitied" is a threat that God will not pity and forgive the house of Israel. (cf. Hosea 1:6,7)
 3. Loammi. "Not my people" is the threat of a broken relationship. (Hosea 1:8,9)

II. God's revelation of their condition and call to repentance.

- A. During the reign of Jereboam II, Israel reached a great state of prosperity, they drifted into an easy, careless life, which led to their destruction.
- B. George L. Robinson lists six specific sins for which they were guilty:
 1. Lack of knowledge. Hosea 4:6, 11.
 2. Pride. ~~6:4~~ *Hos. 5:5*
 3. Instability. 6:4.
 4. Worldliness. 7:8.
 5. Backsliding. 11:7.
 6. Idolatry. 13:2.
- C. Hosea lists some serious faults present in Israel.
 1. Their religion consisted of outward forms at the expense of inward reality. 6:6.
 - a. The "multiplication of altars and sacrifices was not pleasing to God as long as it was not accompanied by the proper attitudes. The religious hypocrisy of Hosea's

- day was patent to God. . ." (Samuel J. Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960, p. 390.)
- b. "It is impossible to express goodness and knowledge apart from obedience to the commands of God, yet it is possible to obey outward forms and fail to please God because of the corruptness of the heart." (Ellis).
 - c. God desires goodness, mercy and knowledge. (Hosea 6:4-6)
2. They had transgressed or broken covenant with God. (Hosea 6:7). It was wilfully broken by man.
 3. They were guilty of murder. (Hosea 6:8) "Gilead" is the name of a district and "city" is used here in the sense that the whole land was full of evildoers. "Political and social corruptness led to murder and bloodshed throughout the land."
 4. The priest, the leaders of the people, had become robbers. (6:9)
 5. They were guilty of whoredom or "spiritual adultery." (6:10) They had joined with other nations and forsaken God. They revered the calves of Samaria. (8:5; 10:5f).
 6. There was international intrigue. Acting like a silly dove that will be caught Israel first seeks help from Assyria and then Egypt, not realizing that God was their help. (7:11-16)
 7. Israel trusted in their great military might to save them instead of trusting in God. (10:13)
- D. "Hosea concludes his book by asking 'Whose is wise?' Who is prudent? The answer is clearly seen. He who walks in the ways of the Lord." (The Old Testament Books and Their Message in the Christian Age, "Hosea", Chester M. Hill, The Manney Co., 1961, p. 372)

III. Some thoughts from Hosea in the New Testament.

- A. The expression "not my people." (2:23; 1:10) appears in Romans 9:25, 26 and the thought is in 1Pet. 2:10. The people who were not his people but were to become his people were the Gentiles.
- B. In Hosea 6:6, we read, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." Jesus used this statement to rebuke "those who found fault because he had mercy on sinners and because his disciples ate grain on the Sabbath." (Matt. 12:7)
- C. In Hosea 11:1, we read, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." This refers to the exodus experience of Israel out of Egypt, but Matthew's application of the passage "to the experience of Jesus makes it quite clear that Matthew understands the word 'fulfill' to include typical fulfillment." (Lewis). (Matt. 2:15)

DISCUSSION & THOUGHT QUESTIONS - Give Scripture

1. When did Hosea write?

What are the background scriptures to Hosea?

2. Who was Hosea's father?
3. Who was Hosea's wife?
4. Give Hosea's children's names and the meaning of each:

- a.
- b.

c.

5. What did Hosea's wife become after he married her?

(In the same manner Israel had forsaken God and followed other nations.)

6. Hosea 2:23 is quoted in Romans 9:25 and referred to what people?

7. Hosea later found his wife sold in the common market and bought her back for how much?

8. God had a controversy with Israel because he did not find what three things in the land?

a.

b.

c.

9. Why did God say his people are destroyed?

10. What two things did God desire more than sacrifice and burnt offerings?

a.

b.

11. What men had become as a "troop of robbers?"

12. Who did God say would "come as an eagle against" Israel because they had transgressed his covenant? (cf. 5:13)

13. God said Israel hath "sown the wind" but shall reap the

How do men always reap? (Gal 6:7, 8;; 2 Cor. 9:6, 7)

14. What did God do for Israel when yet a child?

15. What did God say his people were bent on doing?

Explain.

16. Where did God tell Israel her help was to be found?

17. Name some evil characteristics of Israel. (The evil characteristic is not necessarily named in the verse, but it may just be described.)

a. Hosea 4:6 ignorance

b. Hosea 5:5

c. Hosea 7:8

d. Hosea 8:1

e. Hosea 9:9

f. Hosea 11:7

g. Hosea 12:7

h. Hosea 13:2

18. List as many sins as you can from the following verses of which Israel was guilty: (Hosea 4:2, 10, 11, 14; 5:2, 7; 6:9)

19. Throughout this book God said Israel or Ephraim is like or as several things. See how many you can find and be ready to explain each.

- a. "Israel slideth back" "as a backsliding heifer" 4:16
- b. "for your goodness is"
- c. "I found Israel like"
- d. "Ephraim also is like"
- e. "As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like"
- f. "And Ephraim is as"

20. Despite Israel's many sins God still pleaded with them to do what?

TRUE OR FALSE:

- 1. Israel was guilty of spiritual adultery by joining with other nations.
- 2. Hosea buying back his wife was a picture of God buying Israel back.
- 3. Israel had forgotten the law of God.
- 4. The people were like the priests who were corrupt.
- 5. God said he would be unto Ephraim as a moth.
- 6. God described Ephraim as a "cake not turned."
- 7. The expression "Ephraim is like a silly dove without a heart" means without understanding.
- 8. Ephraim did not make many altars.
- 9. The "day of visitation" in 9:7 referred to the final judgment day.
- 10. Despite all that Israel had done it grieved God to give her up.

VITAL LESSON FOR OUR DAY:

- 1. Man's proper relationship with God is to know God - "no mere intellectual knowledge, but is rather an intimate relationship that comes by living with and for him and must be persistently pursued." (Lewis) Hosea 6:3.
- 2. Disloyalty to God is vividly pictured as "spiritual adultery." He uses the word "whoredom" 16 times. How can the same be done today?
- 3. God's great love for us is amazing despite our weakness and sins. As God loved Israel so he loves his church today. Acts 20:28; Eph. 2:20; 5:23 ff.
- 4. This love must be reciprocated - paid back. Serve him and love and serve others.

HOSEA--STUDIES IN GOD'S LOVE

Charles R. Williams

Introduction:

- I. Why study the Old Testament
 1. Not because it is binding on us as a religious system.
 2. God requires it. Jno. 5:39; Rom. 15:4.
 3. Man needs it.
 - a. To strengthen faith. Rom. 10:17
 - b. To aid in understanding the New. 2 Tim. 3:15.
- II. Why devote time to this particular book?
 1. Hosea not the longest book--14 chapter, 197 verses
 2. Not more important than any other.
 - a. Isaiah - with his great Messianic prophecies.
 - b. Jeremiah - the weeping prophet with his great heart of compassion
 - c. Ezekiel - the great prophet of the exile emphasizing the glory of God
 - d. Daniel - the great prophet of the spiritual kingdom that was to consume all others
 3. Not even considered as a "major" prophet
 4. Because he is the prophet of love of the Old Testament, surpassed only by John in the New Testament.
 - a. Hosea's message of love and the possibility of forgiveness was needed to balance the sternness of Amos' emphasis on righteousness. Amos 5 and 6.
- III. Let us now turn our attention to a brief study of this great prophet and the message of this book. This book falls into two divisions: 1-3; 4-14.

Body:

- I. The story of the prodigal wife (Chapter 1-3) suggests Jesus' story of the Prodigal Son, one of the most touching stories in literature.
 1. Presents many questions:
 - A. Were Hosea and Gomer really married?
 - a. Figurative? - Nothing in text to suggest it.
 - b. Literal? - Favored by plain reading of text.
 - B. Was Hosea asked to do something wrong?
 - a. cf. Abraham and Isaac
 - (1) Objection Abraham didn't really offer Isaac.
 - (2) Answer. Offered him in his heart at beginning of journey--a substitute.
 - b. Was not it possible for God and Hosea to have forgiven Gomer?
 - c. Did not God forgive Israel of the whoredoms of her youth in Egypt? Ezekiel 16: Ezekiel 23:3-4.
 - d. "Such were some of you" 1 Cor. 6
 - e. Love would demand forgiveness.
 2. Hosea and Gomer's children
 - A. "Children of whoredom" - had already borne these when he married her.
 - B. Jezreel - prophesy of the destruction of Israel.
 - C. LORUHAMA (Not pitied)
 - D. LOAMMI (not my people)
 3. Three lessons of each chapter
 - A. First chapter: Israel's condition when selected by Jehovah.
 - B. Second chapter: Israel's awful fall.
 - C. Third chapter: Israel's ransom price paid--15 pieces of silver and a Homer and a half of Barley.
- II. Israel's apostasy from God. 4-14.
 1. 4-5 The terrible results of Israel's fall
 - A. Chapter 4: The sins of the people--no Truth, Mercy, Knowledge
 - B. Chapter 5: The priests and rulers God had hidden his face--5:15.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM HOSEA

Introduction:

1. "Hosea" means "salvation".
2. Time of prophecy from 750-725 B. C. during reign of Jereboam II. (Hos. 1:1; Compare 2 Kings 14-17 for background.)
3. The state of the Northern Kingdom. Review history, giving special attention to the "sin of Jereboam the son of Nebat."
4. Hosea is the prophet of love, the John of the Old Testament. He was the "home missionary" while Jonah was the "foreign missionary".
5. Hosea's Book is the History of the Decline and Fall of the Northern Kingdom.

I. THE MESSENGER--HIS PREPARATION (Chapters 1-3).

1. Commanded to marry a "sacred (?) harlot", which he does marrying Gomer.
2. Children born: Jezreel (Cf. 2 Kings 10:1-4.) Loruhamah (not obtained mercy); Loammi (not my people.) Hosea's wife has played the harlot again and he doesn't believe the last two children are his.
3. She either deserts husband and children or is cast off.
4. Hosea finds her in the slave market. Not lovely as once she was, but his love has not died. He buys her for thirty shekles of silver--half in cash, half in barley, and takes her home.
5. This used as analogy of God's relation to Israel and her apostasy.
6. Hosea "did not merely teach, but incarnated the redeeming love of God"-- (J. A. Brewer, Annotated Bible.)

II. THE MESSAGE--HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CHAPTERS SHOWING THEIR SIN (Chapters 4-13.) Their apostasy caused by:

1. Ignorance. (4:1-6; Cf. v. 9--preachers are ignorant, v. 11.)
2. Pride. (5:5, Following man's command, v. 11, rejected God's king, priesthood, feastdays, law and in this God himself! Cf. creeds, manuals etc. Ignorance in the church. What is wrong?)
3. Instability. (6:4, many are like this in the church--start out fine, but end up badly. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:58, etc.)
4. Worldiness. (7:8, churches and preachers today "mix with denominationalism" in some instances: Illustration of calling on to pray. Rom. 16:17-18.)
5. Transgression. (8:1, especially refers to Ex. 19:5. Have we broken our marriage vows to God? James 4:4, footnote.)
6. Corruption. (9:9, cf. the type sin committed in heathen worship. Col. 2.)
7. Divided Affections. (7:2; Cf. 1 Jno. 2:15-17; James 4:4 etc.)
8. Backsliding. (11:7; Today, Jno. 6:66-68; 2 Tim. 4:10; "bent"--impaled.)
9. Oppression. (12:7--followed practices of evil Canaanites, unfair. Today?)
10. Abandon. (13:1-2, sin more and more--worse and worse. 2Tim. 3:19-12.)

CONCLUSION:

1. Three things expected of Israel: (1) to Know the Lord, (2) love the Lord, (3) turn to the Lord.
2. When this properly done God says, "I will heal their backsliding I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him."
3. Hosea is one of the grandest books of the Bible, showing the justice, righteousness and love of God.
4. Some thirty direct and indirect quotations from Hosea are found in the New Testament.

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MORGAN, G. CAMPBELL

PREACHER'S HOMILETIC COMMENTARY B. J. R.

HOSEA, JOEL, AND AMOS

Introduction:

1. We have come to the final books of the Old Testament, the Minor Prophets.
 - a. In the Hebrew Bible, these books are counted as one and given the collective name "The Twelve."
 - b. They are "minor" only in their relative length.
2. Seven of these prophets delivered their primary messages to Judah, two (i.e., Amos and Hosea) to Israel, two (i.e., Jonah and Nahum) to Nineveh, and one (i.e., Obadiah) to Edom.
3. The books are not in strict chronological order.
 - a. As we study them in groups of three, we will treat them in order of composition so as to fit their messages into a historical context.
 - b. How they came to be in their present order is unknown to us.
4. The three prophets whose writings concern us in this lesson were among the earliest of the writing prophets. Cf. p. 84 of these notes.

Body of the Lesson:

I. **Background to Hosea, Joel, and Amos.**

- A. Joel is nowhere dated in terms of a king's reign or a historical event whose date is known to us.
 1. There is good reason to view it as an early work.
 - a. The enemies of the Jews named in the book (i.e., Philistia, Edom, Egypt, and Phoenicia) are those of the pre-exilic time.
 - b. Its early place in the sequence of prophetic books likely indicates that Jewish tradition counted it an ancient document.
 2. Joel was from Judah and prophesied to his own countrymen. Joel 3:1; cf. 2:15,23,32.
 3. This book has been called a "literary gem" because of its fluent and polished style.
 4. A terrible locust plague and drought gave the occasion for Joel's prophecy. Joel 1:2,17-20.
 5. We remember Joel as the Prophet of Pentecost because of 2:28-32. Cf. Acts 2:17-21.
- B. Amos was a native of Judah whose principal task was to prophesy to the Northern Kingdom.
 1. The kings mentioned in Amos 1:1 date his ministry at ca. 760-750 B.C.
 2. His call to a prophetic work is most interesting. Amos 7:14-15.
 - a. He had no background in the prophetic or priestly line.
 - b. God called a righteous man from a humble occupation to serve as a bold preacher of reform.
 3. The national prosperity of Israel was at its peak in Amos' day and had generated spiritual idleness and national decay. Amos 6:1-6.

4. We remember Amos as the Prophet of Social Justice.
- C. Hosea has the distinction of being the only writing prophet from the Northern Kingdom.
 1. He preached to his own people for half a century or more, ca. 760-710. Hos. 1:1.
 2. He characteristically refers to Israel by the name of its largest tribe, Ephraim. Hos. 4:17; 5:3,5, etc.
 3. Hosea's ministry is set against the background of a terribly tragic family life. Hos. 1-3.
 - a. His wife forsook him and committed adultery with many lovers.
 - b. He continued to love her and eventually bought her back out of slavery.
 4. His experiences with Gomer illustrated God's relationship with Israel.
 5. We remember Hosea as the Prophet of Love.

II. *The Message of Hosea, Joel, and Amos.*

- A. Allowing for particular differences in their settings, audiences, and topics, we may say that *the common message of these books is faithlessness, repentance, and restoration.*
- B. Each prophet called attention to the faithlessness of his hearers before the holy God of heaven.
 1. Joel assumes their sinfulness and warns of the "day of the Lord" coming to Judah. Joel 1:15; 2:1-2.
 2. Amos warned of the same sort of day in Israel and cataloged specific sins leading to it. Amos 5:18-20; cf. 2:6-8.
 3. Hosea accused the whole nation of Israel of spiritual adultery. Hos. 4:1-19.
- C. Each pleaded for genuine repentance.
 1. Write Joel 2:12-13a _____

 2. Write Amos 5:15a _____

 3. Write Hos. 10:12b _____

- D. Each holds out the promise of restoration for those who will repent.
 1. Joel promised deliverance and prosperity. Joel 2:18-27.
 2. Amos looked beyond Israel's impending destruction to blessings the Messiah would bring. Amos 9:11-15.
 3. Hosea emphasized God's willingness to forgive his people. Hos. 11-14.

III. *Major Themes and/or Issues in Hosea, Joel, and Amos.*

- A. The day of the Lord.
 1. This is an important motif which runs through the prophetic books. Isa. 2:12f; Ezek. 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1,11; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:7,14; Zech. 14:1.

2. The expression is part of the biblical doctrine of last things (i.e., eschatology) in both testaments.
 3. In the Old Testament, it is that day when a nation receives its just due for sin.
 - a. There was no one specific day on which this would occur for all nations.
 - b. Each was judged at a time chosen by God.
 4. The day of the Lord was not only for Israel and Judah but also Babylon (Isa. 13:6), Egypt (Jer. 46:10), and other nations (Joel 3:14).
 5. The ultimate day of the Lord, foreshadowed by all other times of judgment in history, is the final Judgment before Christ. Cf. 2 Pet. 3:10-12.
- B. Spiritual adultery.
1. One of the most powerful figures of sin in all of Scripture is in Hosea: infidelity to divine love.
 2. God's relationship to Old Testament Israel was frequently symbolized as a husband-wife relationship. Isa. 62:5; Jer. 3:14.
 3. Thus it was appropriate to represent the nation's sins—especially idolatry—as adultery. Hos. 4:12-13a.
 4. This fundamental unfaithfulness to their covenant with God lay at the root of Israel's other sins. Hos. 4:13b-19.
 5. The New Testament warns us about sinning against God's love. Jas. 4:4; cf. Eph. 5:22-33.
- C. The social conscience of the people of God.
1. Amos was a fiery prophet who evaluated people's religion through their conduct in society.
 - a. Note the sins condemned among Israel's neighbors. Amos 1:1-2:3.
 - b. The rulers of Israel were denounced as thieves, and their wives were caricatured unmercifully. Amos 3:9-4:3.
 - c. Abuse of the poor in the land was denounced severely. Amos 5:10-12.
 2. The brother of Jesus had similar things to say in New Testament times. Jas. 5:1-6.
 3. In recent decades, liberal religious groups have abandoned the Bible for social activism; over the same period, conservative people have often defended the Bible and neglected the poor, oppressed, imprisoned, and helpless.
 4. True religion demands sensitivity to social issues.
 - a. Abortion should not be abandoned to the Catholic Church as its social issue.
 - b. The plight of the elderly must not be left to federal agencies for solution.
 - c. Family disintegration is a concern for Christians before it is the responsibility of psychologists.
 5. Write 1 John 4:20b _____

- D. The costliness of repentance.
1. These prophets all stress the urgency and difficulty of genuine repentance. Cf. Joel 2:13a.
 2. Repentance always involves three very hard things.
 - a. Giving up evil. Acts 19:18-19.
 - b. Giving in to the Lord's commands. Acts 2:38.
 - c. Giving way to heaven's purpose for your life. Rom. 12:1-2.
 3. Thus it is the hardest requirement of salvation.

IV. *A Reader's Guide to Hosea, Joel, and Amos.*

A. The Book of Hosea.

This book begins with an account of Gomer's unfaithfulness to Hosea (1:1-11). She symbolized Israel's unfaithfulness, and the names of her three children by Hosea expressed God's judgment of the nation: Jezreel = scattered by God, Loruhamah = not pitied, and Loammi = not my people. Details of Gomer's adultery are given (2:1-13), and her restoration to Hosea is described (2:14-3:5).

The remainder of the book is a direct application of the Word of God to Israel. The nation is indicted for its many sins (4:1-7:16) and told of the punishment which was to come (8:1-10:15). There was still hope, however, for God's love for the nation was still real (11:1-14:9).

B. The Book of Joel.

Joel describes the terror of a great locust plague of Judah (1:1-20) which foreshadowed the day of the Lord for that nation (2:1-11). Thus he pleaded for repentance (2:12-17) and looked to the blessings which would follow from it (2:18-27). He closes with God's promise to bless mankind through the outpouring of his Spirit (2:28-32). The great blessings to result from that event are described prophetically (3:1-21).

C. The Book of Amos.

Calling them by their capital cities, Amos announces God's judgments against Israel's neighbors (1:1-2:3). He then turns to Judah (2:4-5) and Israel (2:6-16). Details about Israel's specific sins and its impending judgment are related (3:1-6:14).

Amos was then given five visions of the coming judgment of Israel: the locust plague (7:1-3), the devouring fire (7:4-6), the plumb line (7:7-9), a basket of summer fruit (8:1-14), and the altar (9:1-10). In the course of the visions, Amaziah's opposition to Amos at Bethel is related (7:10-17). The book closes with a glimpse of the splendor of the Messiah's coming kingdom (9:11-15).

Conclusion:

1. Notice how the messages of these prophets grew out of their personal experiences and reflected their different personalities.
2. God's ability to use all types of people to his glory is amazing—and consoling.

READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT LESSON

Maxi Assignment: The Books of Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah

Mini Assignment: The Books of Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah

OBSERVATIONS FROM HOSEA

By David S. Hill

The prophet Hosea, the son of Beeri, was a minister to Israel in the last days of freedom before the siege of Israel and Babylonian captivity. He was at work in Israel during the reign of King Uzziah (767-739 B.C.) through King Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.). The name Hosea means "salvation" and should Israel have listened to Hosea who was carrying the words of the Lord, they could have been saved. The book of Hosea parallels the historical record found in II Kings 15-16 and II Chronicles 26-28.

The word of the Lord to Hosea begins with what should be a most beautiful and exciting time of life for a young man like Hosea. It was time for him to be married and Solomon the inspired writer of Proverbs said, "rejoice with the wife of thy youth" (Prov. 5:18). God intended for man and woman to come together in the beauty of marriage and enjoy a special relationship that would last a lifetime (Matt. 19:1-9). But Hosea will not enjoy the special relationship which God had planned because he has set his eyes on a "wife of whoredoms" (1:2). Because his heart is inclined that way God says, "Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms." Please note that God tells him to take a wife of whoredoms, but that could not be God's wish for Hosea or any man (Prov. 5). The priests were strictly commanded not to marry a whore (Lev. 21:7). The Proverb writer said that "by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread" (Prov. 6:26). Israel had been warned many times of the corruption brought on by whoredom and yet Hosea's heart was set on Gomer. A significant comparison is seen in verse two of chapter one: Hosea represents what was going on in all the land. So what should have been a happy time for Hosea and Israel was a sad, bleak time because of sin.

When reading the book of Hosea one can see that God has been cheated on in His marriage to Israel. Gomer did commit adultery and cheated on Hosea (2:2-23) just as Israel had done to God. Hosea is willing to buy her love and affection back (ch.3), but her heart is not with him. God would give Israel every precious thing, yet she would not return from her whoredom with a change of heart. After being taken captive without a king and without a prince, Israel will eventually be prepared to turn her heart back to the Lord (3:5).

But why and how could such a thing happen? The key verse of the book tells us why: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4:6). Israel was not approved unto God because they left His Word and a knowledge of His laws. In Hosea 6:6 God said, "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice; and knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." A ceasing to retain God in one's knowledge will lead to every kind of evil (Rom. 1:28). This is the exact thing that was found in Rome in the New Testament and the people were "without natural affection" (Rom. 1:31). Could it be that we in America know this same situation? What would possess a woman to kill her unborn child in abortion but a heart devoid of God and a knowledge of His Word? What would allow men and women to run for public office in the United States of America and openly promote homosexuality and homosexual rights, moreover be elected with such an unclean, corrupt platform, but a people whose hearts are devoid of God and a knowledge of Him? How could it be a shock to anyone that a president would blatantly lie when all along he has promoted positions such as abortion and homosexuality which are as debased and unnatural as can be? When anyone or any nation ceases to retain God in their

knowledge and refuses His longsuffering and grace, destruction is at the door. Hosea's record of Israel reveals this clearly.

Hosea is a sad book. Many today say, "Be positive! We don't like or need negative preaching and teaching." Yet God wrote some of the most negative books to be found anywhere. Why? Because Israel needed to know and see how bad they really were in the sight of God. God said, "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor" (9:1). How graphic, how negative, but how true it was. Israel could not see her own eminent destruction because sin and whoredom had blinded her eyes. In chapter 14 of the book of Hosea God's longsuffering could not be clearer. He painted the sad picture of Israel's condition throughout the book but ends with the earnest plea, "O Israel return unto the Lord thy God." Notice that if they will just turn unto the Lord and confess their iniquity God will forgive, forget and bless them. But, sadly the Father's faithful plea was not heard.

In closing Hosea brings a couple of other Bible references to mind. First is the statement by Paul in II Corinthians 6:14: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Also contained in that same verse is the question "what fellowship has light with darkness?" Finally there is this question: what do members of Christ have in common with harlotry? (I Cor. 6:15-20). When one studies the book of Hosea, it's easy to see that even though 2,600 years have gone by man hasn't changed. His heart seems to be set on doing evil and God will let it happen. The sad thing is that an awful price has already been paid and is yet to be paid for unforgiven sin. The Lord will forgive if we will turn to Him.

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EZEKIEL

By Dan Jones

When God called Ezekiel to his prophetic office, the Babylonian captivity was well underway. Along with king Jehoiachin and others, Ezekiel was a part of the second deportation of the Southern Kingdom of Israel into Babylon. According to 1:1-2 Ezekiel was called "in the thirtieth year" (probably meaning that Ezekiel was thirty years of age) and in the "fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity." He saw "visions of God" (1:1) and was told that he was being sent to the rebellious, sinful, impudent and stiffhearted children of Israel and was to say unto them, "Thus saith the Lord God" (2:3-4).

Ezekiel's message was basically twofold consisting of both doom and hope. The captivity of the children of Israel would continue for the divinely appointed period of time (seventy years as prophesied by Jeremiah). The book stresses the fact that this captivity was the punishment for their sins and that Jerusalem would be destroyed. Yet it offers hope for the return of a remnant (14:22) and envisions the unity, peace and redemption that ultimately would be enjoyed under "David" as shepherd and king (34:23-24; 37:24-25). The promise of a remnant involves the preserving of the seed line through which the Savior would come. "David" is a reference to the Messiah Himself who was to be of the seed of David (II Sam. 7:12-13; Isa. 11:1-5; Acts 2:25-36), the one Shepherd that God would send to bless all mankind (cf. John 10:16).

The book of Ezekiel employs figurative and symbolic language, parables and allegories in order to reveal God's message through the prophet and to the children of Israel. It is literally full of lessons and principles that need to be learned and applied even today (Rom. 15:4). Although portions of the book are difficult to understand and require a great deal of close, careful study, it also contains many lessons that are readily perceived and easily grasped. The following few are submitted for the serious consideration, contemplation and profit of all who read.

As noted earlier, Ezekiel was told that when he spoke to the people he was to say, "Thus saith the Lord God" (2:4;

3:27). This emphasizes the all-important truth that God's Word is to be taught and preached "as is" without addition, subtraction or modification of any sort. While teaching involves explaining the Scriptures or "giving the sense" thereof (Neh. 8:8), man cannot improve or enhance the will of God. He should not try to do so and he is condemned if he does try (Gal. 1:8-9; Rev. 22:18-19). He must speak "as the oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11). This same principle is found in God's instruction to the prophet Jonah when he was told to go to Nineveh and "preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee" (Jonah 3:2).

O how many there are, especially preachers, who need to give heed to this lesson today! Yes, this means preachers in denominational churches. But it also includes many preachers, elders and members within the churches of Christ. It includes those who err by preaching and promoting doctrines contrary to the gospel of Christ (II Tim. 4:3-4; Rom. 16:17-18), those who fellowship, support and endorse false teachers (II John 9-11; Eph. 5:11), those who ignore and neglect portions of truth they consider unpleasant, unpopular or controversial (Acts 20:20, 26-27) and even those who make little or no effort to live and practice the truths they acknowledge and preach (Phil. 1:27; I Tim. 4:12).

In preaching the pure word of God, the faithful proclaimer is not to be afraid of those who hate and reject the truth. Rather, truth is to be preached whether those who are taught are willing to listen or not (Ezek. 2:6-7; 3:27; II Tim. 4:1-2). As long as fidelity to truth is maintained, there is every reason to be courageous and no reason to be fearful of men (Josh. 1:5-9; Acts 18:9-10; I Pet. 3:14; Heb. 13:5-6). Fear should only be directed toward the One who can and will destroy the disobedient eternally (Matt. 10:28; II Thess. 1:7-9).

Today many shy away from "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15) lest, God forbid, they hurt someone's feelings or make someone mad. Granted, it is not our intention and aim to offend, but the truth offends those who do not love it with all their heart. It has always been this

way and always will be! Our Lord did not seek to offend anyone, yet when He was informed that the Pharisees were offended by His teaching (Matt. 15:12) He did not rush to apologize for the truth. Rather He said, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14). It is far better to face those who do not appreciate sound teaching now, than to face the Lord in judgment knowing that we failed to follow His commands. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

Further, a desire to adhere faithfully to the revealed will of God should be coupled with an acute awareness of the obligation one has to teach and warn others. God makes personal responsibility for sin crystal clear, but He makes it just as clear that Ezekiel will be held accountable for warning, admonishing, exhorting and encouraging the people to turn from sin and to righteousness. If he fails to "sound the trumpet" their blood will be upon his hands (Ezek. 3:17-21; 33:1-9). Likewise, we should feel compelled to teach the truth (I Cor. 9:16) and should realize that we have a debt to pay with regard to those who are lost and in need of the saving gospel (Rom. 1:14-16). Like Paul, we should have a deep passion for the souls of men (Rom. 9:1-3) and should earnestly desire, pray for and labor for their salvation (Rom. 10:1).

Ezekiel served faithfully as priest during an extremely difficult period in the history of Israel. Truly he exemplified his name which means "Jehovah strengthens". What was true then is true now—it takes strong, stouthearted men and women of faith to carry out the Lord's will; people who are neither afraid nor ashamed to stand firmly upon, humbly follow and boldly proclaim God's precious Word. If this we will do, we will be blessed both now and in eternity (Mark 10:30; I Tim. 4:8). God will be with us and help us. As David said:

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from which cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. (Ps. 121:1-2)

JOEL:

“The land mourns” (Joel 1: 10) - Lessons from a locust plague

Brett Rutherford

Introduction

The book of Joel is among the shortest in Scripture, however, there are a few books in the Bible that have a higher percentage of their message quoted by other prophetic writers. Of the seventy-three verses found in Joel's book twenty-seven of them are included in the message of other prophetic writers. Quotes from Joel appear in the writings of Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Obadiah, Ezekiel, Malachi, Peter, Luke and Paul. The fact that Joel is quoted so often by other inspired men is an indication of the significance of this short book.

Joel's name means “Yahweh is God.” “Joel” was a very common name throughout Israel's ancient history. Apart from his name, the only other fact we know about Joel is the name of his father. His father was Pethuel. Prophets would often mention the name of their father if their father was a man who was well known to those of his generation. However, this Pethuel seems to be of no particular importance to readers for he is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture. It would seem that the name of Joel's father is likely given to distinguish him from the many other Joels running around Judah at the time of the prophet's ministry. From what we can glean from the Joel's book he does not seem to have been born to any privilege. He appears to have held no post of distinction. In fact, the prophet seems to distance himself from the ruling elite and the religious leadership.

Most scholars support the Jewish traditional view that Joel's prophetic ministry fell under the reign of Joash (835 to 796 B.C.). The basis for the argument of an earlier date for Joel is the list of the enemies of Judah given in chapter three. The primary foes of Judah in the ninth century B.C. are given in this list (the Philistines, Edom, Syria and Egypt etc.) Since Assyria is not found in the list of those nations troubling Judah it is not likely that the book of Joel was written after the mid-seventh century BC. Prophesying during the reign of Joash would make Joel a contemporary of Elisha, and possibly Hosea.

The Purpose of the Book

The purpose of the book of Joel was to encourage the people to see beyond the troubles brought by warfare and natural calamity to an age of refreshing. The prophet is trying to draw the people's attention away from the concerns of this world and refocus their minds upon the spiritual. To accomplish his purpose Joel divides his discourse into two parts. The first half of Joel contains the prophet's plea to the children of Judah to repent before calamity befell them (1:1- 2:27). The last half of Joel includes an expression of God's mercy to the faithful remnant, and a prophecy of the events that would usher in the Christian Age (2:28-3:21).

Lessons from Joel 1:1-2:27

In the first half of the book of Joel warns the people of Judah that the Lord is planning to punish them by sending a plague of locusts. Locusts were on the Mosaic list of divine curses that would be brought upon Israel for her disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:42) Warnings that God would send locusts to punish the Israelites can also be found in II

Chronicles 7:13 and Amos 5:9. When the devastating power of the locust is taken under consideration the threat of these destructive creatures should have been a powerful motivation for the children of Israel to mend their ways.

It is truly amazing how catastrophic a locust plague can be. The largest known swarm of locusts was observed near the Red Sea in 1889. This swarm covered 1,036 square kilometres. It was estimated by entomologists that a swarm of this size would have been comprised of forty billion insects. When one considers that a single locust can eat his own weight in food every day one begins to gain an appreciation for the kind of devastation caused by billions of these insects in just a few days. The catastrophic effects of a swarm are amplified if these insects are carried by a strong wind. A good wind can allow a swarm of locusts to cover 500 kilometres a day.

Certainly, the threat of a locust plague should have inspired a penitent response from among the people. However, it is likely that the swarm of locusts that God threatened to bring upon Judah may have represented something far more ominous. The locusts of Joel could represent an overwhelming military force. They are described in terms of an army in verses four through eleven of chapter two.

The fact that the locust plague will come from the north also adds weight to the argument that this swarm was not literally made up of locusts, but of men. The vast majority of locusts that have troubled Palestine in ancient and modern times have originated in the east. It is extremely rare for locusts to descend upon Palestine from the north. However, invading armies from Mesopotamia most often entered Israel and Judah from the north. When the Assyrians invaded Israel they first took Syria before sweeping away the northern kingdom of the Hebrews. When Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonians into Judah in 606 B.C., 597 B.C. and 586 B.C. he invaded from the north. It is very likely that the threat to Judah was not an army of mindless insects, but the impenetrable ranks of a determined, unstoppable Babylonian army.

The first thing one should always consider when a nation is disciplined is the causes for that discipline. Judah was being punished. In the first place, they were accused of drinking wine (1:5). The problem of alcohol is a reoccurring theme throughout the books of prophecy. Alcohol has always been a factor in the spiritual and physical decline of a people. In the second place, it appears the people were not making the offerings that God expected from them. The author of Proverbs wrote that "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 15:8). God desires to be worshipped in "spirit and in truth" (John 4:23, 24). The Lord desires praise from a pure heart (Proverbs 21:3).

In the first half of Joel's dissertation the prophet highlights the utter futility of resisting God. The curse of locust plague was a reminder to men that there is no hope of a positive outcome when one defies God. If God can use the smallest creature to bring a nation to the brink of extinction men what can man hope to gain by opposing the will of God (1 Samuel 5:9; Psalm 2:1-12).

Another lesson that can be gleaned from the first section of Joel relates to the proper response toward natural disaster and warfare. Warfare and natural disaster have plagued mankind since Adam and Eve were removed from the protective paradise of Eden. Obviously, no one desires his nation to be brought to its knees through the calamity of war or disaster, but these ever present dangers can bring about positive change. Natural disaster and warfare on the scale of that which Joel described can help a nation realign its priorities. When disaster takes away material possessions all that remains are the blessings that bestowed upon those who have a spiritually focused life. Disasters can

motivate people turn back to God. The need to be receptive to God's guidance can be stirred up in the heart of men. God's purpose for threatening Judah with war and natural calamity in Joel's day was to bring his people to a penitent state (Joel 2:12-17). Natural disasters and warfare remind a nation of the futility of laying up treasures on earth (Matthew 6:19,20). These calamities also give us an opportunity to express our generosity (Proverbs 19:17; Matthew 25:31-40).

The first section of Joel also serves to remind us that the day of the Lord (a day of judgment) is inevitable. The only way that one can escape the wrath of God is through true repentance. God would rather bless than punish (2:13, 14; II Peter 3:1-9). Verses thirteen and fourteen of Joel chapter two are a great testimony to the character and nature of God. He is gracious, merciful, and slow to anger. He is motivated by kindness not malevolence.

Lessons from Joel 2:28-3:21

After the plague, Joel speaks of a time of restoration and respite for the people of God (Joel 2:12-27). The prophet comforts the Hebrews with a message that the restoration of Judah would be followed by a great age of "deliverance" (2:28-32). This era of salvation would be ushered in by wonderful events that would occur in Jerusalem (2:32). These events will include the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh, miraculous activity, and strange astronomical phenomena (2:30-31). Furthermore, Joel states that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord" during this era shall be "delivered" (2:32).

We don't have to speculate on when this age of deliverance would commence. Peter informed the audience of Jews on the Day of Pentecost (circa AD 33) that Joel's "age of deliverance" had its beginnings on that day (Acts 2:14-21). Peter equated the "age of refreshing" of which Joel spoke with the Christian Age.

The question then arises, "How were the various elements of Joel's prophecy fulfilled in the Christian Age?" First of all, God had promised, through Joel, that the Spirit would be poured out on "all flesh" (2:28). Does this statement imply that every living thing that had flesh would benefit from this outpouring of the Spirit? Of course not! All living creatures of flesh is not what Joel meant by "all flesh." Joel did not mean that cats, dogs, pigeons, horses etc. would receive the outpouring of the Spirit when the Christian Age was ushered in. What then is meant by the statement that "Spirit would be poured out on all flesh?"

In order to understand Joel's message one needs to appreciate the fact that the Bible divides the world into two categories of people (flesh): (1) the Jews (2) the Gentiles or Greeks (Romans 1:14,16; I Corinthians 1:24; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11). Therefore, when the prophet states that "all flesh" will receive an outpouring of the Spirit he meant that there would be Jews and Gentiles (Greeks) among those who would receive this outpouring.

For the first ten years of the church's history the Spirit was only poured out only on the Jews. The apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and many of the Jewish Christians received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit through the laying of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:14-18). Ten years after Peter preached on Pentecost the Roman Cornelius became the first Gentile convert to Christianity. It was then that the Holy Spirit was first poured out upon the Gentiles (Acts 10:24-48). The pouring out of the Spirit upon the household of Cornelius marks was moment at which Joel's prophecy was perfected.

Joel also wrote that “whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord” during this age of refreshing “shall be saved” (Joel 2:32). What does this statement mean? How does one “call upon the name of the Lord.” First of all, it is important to reflect upon the latter part of this verse. Salvation would be available to those who live in the age of refreshing (the Christian Age) of which Joel spoke. It was the shedding of Christ’s blood that made the remission of sins and salvation possible (Hebrews 10:1-10). It was this event that ushered in the Christian Age. The fact that salvation would be offered to those who called upon the name of the Lord is further evidence that the age of refreshing of which Joel spoke could only have begun after the death of the Christ.

We can conclude that “calling on the name of the Lord” is a reference to the manner by which man can come into contact with the blood of Christ and receive remission of sins (i.e. salvation). It is a statement that implies that man must respond to God’s offer of grace in order to benefit from it. This act of “calling on the name of the Lord” is defined in Acts 22:16. Ananias told Paul that he would be “calling on the name of the Lord” by being baptized. Ananias also stated that this act of baptism would also coincide with the washing away of Paul’s sins. To call upon the name of the Lord is achieved through obedience to the commands of God. More specifically “to call upon the name of the Lord” means to engage in that act which results in the removal (or remission) of one’s sins. The act that brings us into contact with the redeeming blood of Christ, and removes our sin, is baptism (Acts 22:16; Galatians 3:27; I Peter 3:21). Therefore, all who have been baptized for the remission of sins have “called on the name of the Lord.” If you have not been baptized for the remission of sins then you have not called upon the name of the Lord and you are not saved!

The Holy Spirit closes the book of Joel with a reminder that God will punish the righteous and reward the faithful remnant (3:1-21). God promised Judah that He would bring all the wicked nations to the Valley of Jehoshaphat and squash them like grapes in the winepress (3:12-13). The last chapter is a sobering reminder that God is in control of the kingdoms of men (Daniel 4:32). For example, the Jews of Joel’s day could not imagine a time when Egypt would be desolate (3:19). The Hebrews of Joel’s day couldn’t conceive of a time when a superpower like Egypt would be reduced to a weak and insignificant player in the region. However, that is exactly what happened in less than two hundred years after Joel’s prophetic career. No individual, no nation (no matter how powerful) can withstand the might of the Almighty. Our only opportunity to escape God’s wrath is to submit.

Dates

1. It may have come after the Edomites had invaded Judah and used great violence - cf 2 Chron. 28:17 and Joel 3:19. *Ahaz reigned - 741-726 B.C.*
2. It may have come after the Philistines had invaded their cities, and slain or expelled their inhabitants (2 Chron. 28:18 and Joel 3:4-6).

When a crisis occurs one usually hears four voices interpreting what is going to happen and what you need to do

1. The optimists will say "This crisis is not going to last - be brave."
2. The pessimists will say, "It's going to get worse and there is no escape! We're done for."
3. The alarmists will see the enemy behind every tree.
4. The scoffers will question the news report and shrug their shoulder saying, "What difference does it make anyway?"
5. The realist accepts it and faces it

Chapter 3

1. Nations, prepare for judgment (3:1-8)
2. " " for war (3:9-13)
3. " " for defeat (3:14)
4. After that day Blessings found out
 - a. A Holy city (3:17)
 - b. A restored land (3:18-19)
 - c. A cleansed people (3:20-21a)
 - d. A glorious king (3:21b)

INTRODUCTION:

1. The name Joel means "Jehovah is God." It is a very common name in the Bible as twelve men bear it.
2. Joel was a prophet of Judah as the contents of his book show.
3. The exact date of the prophecy of Joel is not known - some place him early among the prophets, some late. *opposite page*
4. In our study let's observe:

DISCUSSION:

I. THE BOOK.

- A. The book's close is bright while it begins in gloom.
- B. Jack Lewis lists three major sections of the book:
 1. "The locust plague and drought call the people to repentance. (1:1-2:27).
 2. The Day of the Lord, heralded by the outpouring of the Spirit. (2:28-3:16).
 3. The glorious future of Judah and Jerusalem. (3:17-21). "
- C. "With a God-given responsibility to relate the prophetic message to contemporary developments" Joel comes "to grips with the problems facing their generation, concluding with a promise of restoration." (O. T. Speaks, p. 393).

II. THE MESSAGES OF THE BOOK OF JOEL.

- A. The day of the Lord is a very prominent feature as it appears five times.
 1. The expression "day of the Lord" appears in Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14. (Mark these in your Bible).
 2. The day of the Lord here is not a day of gladness here but comes as destruction from the Almighty. (1:15)
 3. In the third section of the book the day of the Lord comes upon the wicked nations.
 - a. Their wickedness is great. (3:13).
 - b. They are judged because they have scattered God's people. (3:2,3).
 - c. The Phoenicians and Philistines are denounced because they sold slaves to the Greeks. (3:6)
 - d. Desolation to Egypt and Edom is promised. (3:19-21).
 4. The day of the Lord is a prominent feature in the New Testament. Mt. 25:36ff; 1 Thess. 5:1-5; 2 Peter 3:1-14.
- B. "Repentance" is the cry of the prophet.
 1. In the face of God's coming destruction the people are urged to turn from their wicked ways.
 2. He calls upon them to "turn ye even to me with all your heart..." (2:12).
 3. He calls for a rending of the heart (an inward change) rather than an external show of tearing the garments. (2:13).
 4. He admonishes the priests and the ministers to weep and call upon the Lord "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them..." (2:17).
 5. All this in the hope that God would change his mind and not bring the destruction upon them. (2:14).

III. THE BOOK OF JOEL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

- A. Peter appealed to Joel 2:28-32 to explain the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. (Acts 2:14-20).
- B. Paul used the phrase "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13; Joel 2:32).
- C. There are echoes of it in the book of Revelation.
 1. The moon turned to blood. (Rev. 6:12; Joel 2:31).
 2. Treading the winepress as a symbol of judgment. (Joel 2:13; Rev. 14:20; 19:15).
 3. The locust of 2:1-11 may be echoed in Revelation 9:3-11).

TRUE OR FALSE

1. F Joel prophesied to Israel.
2. F There had been many plagues of locusts like Joel described. *1:2*
3. T Joel pleaded with the people to repent that God's wrath might be turned *2:12*
4. T Joel uses the expression "day of the Lord" five times. *1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14*
5. F Joel's description of the locusts is not literal, but figurative.
6. T The locusts are referred to as the army of the Lord. *2:11*
7. T The selling of boys and girls is mentioned in the book. *3:3*
8. T The people are told to make their farming tools into weapons of war. *3:10*
9. T God is pictured as sitting in judgment over the heathen in the valley of Jehoshaphat. *3:12*
10. T All of us go through the valley of decision.

DISCUSSION AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Who was Joel's father? Pethuel 1:1
2. The events Joel described were to be so terrible that how many generations were to be told? Three 1:3
3. Name the four different kinds of insects and worms used to bring about the destruction.
 - a. Palmerworm 1:4
 - b. Locust
 - c. Cankerworm
 - d. Caterpillars
4. What were the drunkards told to do? Awake, weep, wail Why? Wine cut off 1:5,6
5. Why would the priests lament and mourn? Offerings cut off 1:8-9
6. Why would the farmer be ashamed and howl? Harvest of field cut off 1:10-12
7. In view of the coming destruction name at least ten things the people were told to do. (1:14; 2:12,13,15,16)

a. <u>Fast</u>	b. <u>Gather leaders together</u>
c. <u>Cry</u>	d. <u>Repent</u>
e. <u>Weeping</u>	f. <u>Mourning</u>
g. <u>Render your heart</u>	h. <u>Turn unto the Lord</u>
i. <u>Blow the trumpet</u>	j. <u>Sanctify the congregation</u>

8. As a result of the day of the Lord and destruction from the Almighty, name eight things that would happen.

a. The meat is cut off before our eyes. 1:16a.

b. Joy and gladness cut off from the house 1:17

c. Seed is rotten

d. Garden land desolate

e. Barns broken down

f. Com is withered

g. Beast grown

h. Cattle are perplexed

9. In describing the advance of the locusts in destruction God uses several descriptive terms. List them.

a. Their appearance is like that of horses.

b. They run as (1) Horsemen

(2) Run like mighty men - 2:7

c. Their noise is as three things:

(1) Chariots (2) Fire

(3) People set on battle array 2:5

d. They climb like men of war 2:7

e. They march everyone on his way 2:7

f. They enter the city like a thief 2:9

g. They are so thick and so many that four startling things occur:

(1) Earth quake (2) Heavens tremble

(3) Moon shall be dark (4) Stars not shining 2:10

10. The leader in control of this great army of destruction is the Lord

11. How is one to turn to the Lord? With all his heart 2:12

What is the meaning of "rend your heart, and not your garments?"

It is to be inward, not outward 2:13

12. How does Joel 2:15-27 show that calling upon God can have tremendous effects? _____

God will hear 2:15-17

13. Where in the New Testament is Joel 2:28-32 quoted? Acts 2:16-21

What did the New Testament speaker explain to be its fulfillment? The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost

14. Where did God say he would bring all nations? Valley of Jehoshaphat

He would do this because they had done what things? (3:2-6) a. Scattered his

heritage b. Cast lots for his people c. Given a boy for a harlot d. Sold a girl for drink

e. Parted my land f. Taken his silver + gold

15. In what valley did Joel say the day of the Lord had come? Jehoshaphat

16. Name at least five great characteristics of God named in this book. a. Gracious

b. Merciful c. Slow to anger d. Great kindness e. Repentance of evil

VITAL LESSONS FOR OUR DAY:

1. The longsuffering of God is vividly portrayed as He calls upon them to repent again and again.
2. The goodness of God, as he presupposes repentance on the part of the people, manifests itself.
3. There is the valley of decision in all our lives.

The Book of JOEL

Introduction

- A. The Prophet Joel was not one to waste words (as evidenced by his brief book of 73 verses) while seeking to pinpoint crucial issues. He was a courageous prophet always ready to preach whatever truth God determined necessary.
1. In these three chapters Joel emphasizes that divine judgement comes upon sin and sinners whoever they are. He underscores the desire of Jehovah for spiritual religion and not just mere external forms of observance. But most of all - Joel is known as the "Prophet of Pentecost" as he prophesies that great and notable day of the Lord full of Messianic significance and promise.
 2. Practically nothing is known of the personal history of Joel the man.* His name meant "Jehovah is God," his father was named Pethuel (1:1), and he probably preached in Jerusalem around 835 B.C. Other than that we know nothing.
- B. The Book In Summary:* Joel has been sent from God to call the covenant people to repentance and holiness. God desires a sanctified people through whom He may fulfill His covenant promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) of redemption for the world through the Christ (Galatians 3:16).
1. The book begins in gloom, but closes full of bright and brilliant hope; for out of the terror of the locusts plague comes the anticipation of a future great and glorious under the Messiah.

BODY

I. OVERVIEW

"The Day of the Lord"

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- I. The Lord's ALARM, ch.1-2:11
 - A. The Plea for repentance - based upon Judgement
 - II. The Lord's APPEAL, ch.2:12-17
 - A. The Plan for repentance - based upon Sincerity
 - III. The Lord's ASSURANCE, ch.2:18-3:21
 - A. The Purpose for repentance - based upon Blessing
 1. Immediate physical blessing, 2:18-27
 2. Future spiritual blessing, 2:28-32
 - a. God's victory over His enemies, 3:1-15
 - b. God's presence with His people, 3:16-21

PLAGUE

PLEA

PROSPERITY

- A. The headline in Joel's day screamed forth the news:

Locusts Plague Strips Countryside Bare; WORST DISASTER IN DECADES!

But God uses the occasion to teach the prophet and the people an important lesson about the future.

1. Though the land had been laid desolate by the invading locust army, its condition would pale by comparison with the devastation to be inflicted during another "day of the Lord" -- a day when Jehovah would use a real army to destroy His people.
 - a. There was only one response: REPENT and RETURN!
- B. There is much debate over whether or not this is a literal locust invasion. I believe it is. Such is based upon:
 - a. The graphic and detailed description of the locusts and the destruction brought by them.
 - b. In 2:4-7 Joel says that the invaders are like horsemen, and sound like chariots, and scale the walls like soldiers.
 - c. Finally, compare 2:11 with 2:25. "My great army" of verse 25 is the army of literal locusts that God uses as the executors of divine judgement upon His people.

II. INSIGHT

A. The Lord's ALARM: A Plea For Repentance Based Upon *Judgement*, ch.1-2:11.

1. There had never been anything like this before. Usually when some natural disaster strikes there is someone who can remember a worse one - *"This isn't nearly as bad as the blizzard of '44!"* ...but not this time, vs.2-3. Here is un-examined, unparalleled devastation.

- a. Verse 4 is descriptive of total destruction as the locusts appear in waves upon the land. They are mighty and without number (vs.6).

They are a host of which there is no end. Each of them is a harmless creature which you can catch in your hand, but appalling in their power of collective devastation.

James Boyce, *Impressions of South Africa*

- b. *"It's teeth are the teeth of a lion, and it has the fangs of a lioness,"* (vs.6b).

Their teeth, though tiny, are the weapons of this army. In proportion to their very small bodies, their jaws are even stronger than a lions.

National Geographic, December, 1915

- c. *"It has made my vine a waste..."* (vs.7)

Once entering a vineyard, the sprawling vines would in the shortest time be nothing but bark...When the daintier morsels were gone, the bark was eaten off the young topmost branches, which, after exposed to the sun, bleached snow white.

National Geographic, December 1915

2. The picture is one of complete devastation. As a result the land and the people mourn (vs.8-9). The description of the locust invasion is now followed by a call to repentance and fasting before the Lord (vs.13-14).

- a. See verse 15. This awful calamity had come upon the people as a warning of "the day of Jehovah" which would still come - a day of invading armies, not insects - unless some spiritual changes were made.

- b. The remainder of the chapter describes the effect of the locust plague:
1) drought, and 2) fire.

3. *"Blow the trumpet..." "Sound the alarm!"* (2:1). What a lesson for preachers today. We are in desperate need of real hard, clear preaching that comes from a heart whose only motive is a love for the Lord and a love for the lost. Joel was a champion of what a preacher should be. And, he, like Isaiah, sounded forth the alarm and held nothing back (Isaiah 58:1). There was no softening of God's message in the voice of Joel. There was no hint of compromise in his words - "Sound the alarm!" Didn't Paul say something to this effect in 2 Timothy 4:1-5?

- a. The sounding of the trumpet in Israel signified one of four things: 1) calling the people for assembly, 2) starting them on their journey, 3) sounding an alarm of attack, 4) calling the congregation to a holy convocation at the beginning of a festival (Numbers 10:1-10). Here the trumpet is used to sound the alarm of coming attack.

- 1) Unless genuine repentance occurs the "day of the Lord" would come with results far worse than insect nuisance. Here follows more descriptions of the locust plague:

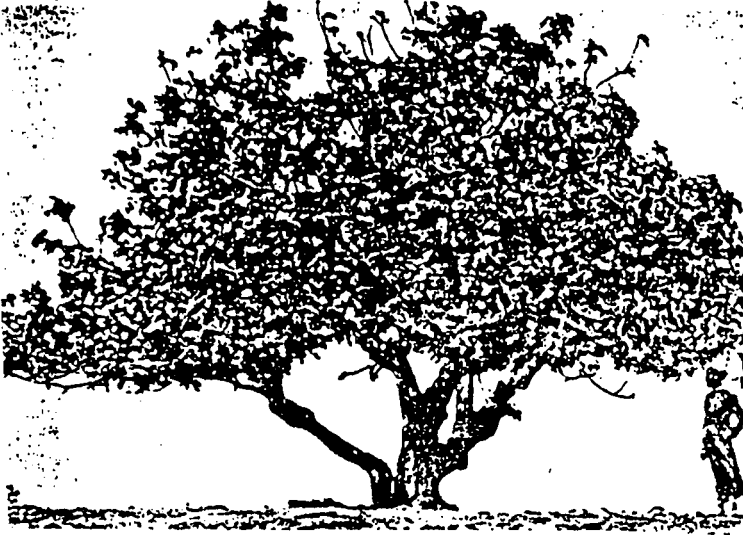
- b. See verse 2. As for Joel's likening of the locusts to *"dawn spread over the mountains,"* G.A. Smith says:

No one who has seen a cloud of locusts can question the realism of this picture; the heavy gloom of the immeasurable mass of them, shot by gleams of light where a few of the sun's imprisoned beams have broken through the storm of wings. This is like dawn

beaten down upon the hilltops, and crushed by rolling masses of cloud, in conspiracy to prolong the night.

- c. And verse 3 - "A fire consumes before them, and behind them a flame burns..." The name "locust" literally means the "burners of the land." Before them there would be a garden like Eden - minutes later nothing but a desolate wilderness!
- d. Verse 4-10 continue the chilling portrayal of Jehovah's insect army.

Before



They have no 'king' nor leader, yet they falter not, but press on in serried ranks, urged in the same direction by an irresistible impulse, and turn neither to the right nor to the left for any sort of obstacle. When a wall of a house lies in the way, they climb straight up, going over the roof to the other side, and blindly rush in at the open doors and windows. When they come to water, they never attempt to go around it, but unhesitatingly leap in and are drowned, and their dead bodies, floating the surface, form a bridge for their companions to pass over. They continue to march on...

After



Diastrous as they were in the country, equally obnoxious they became about the homes, crawling up the walls and squeezing in through cracks of closed doors or windows, entering the very dwelling rooms. Women frantically swept the walls and roofs of their homes, but to no avail. They even fell into one's shirt collar from the walls above. Imagine the feeling with a dozen or so creatures over an inch long, with sawlike legs and rough bodies, making a race course of your back. There was no opening one's mouth, for some would get in. Yet all this was nothing; for when we were to eat, they gave us no respite; and when we went to cut a piece of meat, we cut a locust with it, and when a man opened his mouth to put in a morsel, he was sure to chew one of them too!

- 1) It is no wonder that when Moses announced a coming locust plague that Pharaoh's counsellors said in desperation, "Knowest thou not that Egypt is destroyed!"
- 4. Verse 11 concludes this section. If God's people thought this was awesome, wait until they see what Jehovah can do with a real army against them. If they felt Jehovah's wrath with bugs - wait till they see it expressed with swords!
- B. The Lord's APPEAL: A Plan For Repentance Based Upon Sincerity, 2:12-17. Here is Jehovah's eleventh hour appeal unto the people, vs.12-13.
 - 1. "Rend your heart and not your garments..." How often has this been the prophetic appeal? We saw it in our last study (Hosea 6:6) and we will see it again. God desires more than words. God desires more than action. GOD WANTS THE HEART! He wants His people to be loyally and totally committed to His cause (Deut.6:5-6; Matt.22:36-37).
 - a. Read Psalm 51:10,16-17 when you get a chance. Also Hebrews 10:22. God wants repentance based upon sincerity. And He knows...

2. Verse 17 seems to indicate again that unless the people repent at the presence of the locust judgements, there would follow a more serious invasion by heathen nations and rule by them over the people of God. Hence, God's APPEAL.

C. The Lord's ASSURANCE: The Purpose For Repentance Based Upon Blessing, 2:18-3:21.
We see that if repentance occurs the Lord assures His people of two things:

1. Immediate physical blessings, 2:18-27, and

2. Future spiritual blessings, 2:28-32.

a. As the driving out of the locusts and the outpouring of the abundance of rain would bring forth material blessings, so now would the outpouring of the Spirit bring forth a spiritual harvest.

b. In that day Jehovah would pour out His Spirit, thus bringing deliverance for all who would call upon the name of the Lord (verse 28,32). We know that this has a spiritual application to Pentecost due to Peter's quotation of Joel's prophecy in Acts 2.

1) Also here is the divine definition to "calling upon the name of the Lord." Acts 2:21 informs us that if we call upon the name of the Lord we can be saved. What does this exactly mean? Verse 37-38. Calling upon the name of the Lord is synonymous with doing what the Lord said to do. See also Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22:16.

3. Chapter three concludes with God's continual victory over His enemies (vs.1-2a) and His assurance of protection for His people (vs.16-21).

"For the Lord dwells in Zion."

III. THREE THINGS

A. "The Day of the Lord" This phrase is frequently alluded to in our day and yet it is often misunderstood. The popular conception is that the statement always refers to the second coming of our Lord. Such is far from the case. In fact, NOT ONE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET EVER USED THAT EXPRESSION TO SIGNIFY THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST! The work of the Old Testament prophet was in regard to His *first* coming (not His second), and in regard to judgement upon the Jewish Mosaical system (not judgement at the end of time). It isn't until the New Testament that "the day of the Lord" signifies the second coming.

1. Here in the prophets "the day of the Lord" would be a day in which God would be lifted up, exalted and glorified either by (1) the destruction of the ungodly, or (2) the salvation of His people. Either way it would be a day-of-the-Lord.

a. Because the expression is used five times in his short book, Joel is known as the prophet of "the day of the Lord" (1:15; 2:1,11,31; 3:14).

2. Joel sees a "day of the Lord" in regard to physical Israel. This day of the Lord would be a day of judgement upon Judah, 2:1. Throughout the Old Testament the Hebrews had a false notion about "the day of the Lord" They felt that since they were Jehovah's choice people that "the day of the Lord" naturally signified something favorable. Such was not always the case (Amos 5:18).

a. As a result Joel makes the appeal in 2:12-13. The day-of-the-Lord could be avoided if the people would repent and return. If so, "the day of the Lord" would be a day of blessing instead, 2:18-19.

3. Joel sees a "day of the Lord" in regard to spiritual Israel - a future day of judgement upon the wicked (2:30-32) and blessing upon the righteous (2:28-29).

a. Verse 30-32: Judgement upon the wicked. Notice that this is exactly the same language used by Jesus in Matthew 24:29-30. His second coming? NO, for in verse 34 Jesus said that these things would occur in the generation of people to whom He spoke. This is His coming in judgement upon Jerusalem. How do we know for sure? Go back to Matt.23:37-39; 24:1-2.

1) See also 24:15-21; Luke 21:20 - Who surrounded Jerusalem? ROME!

2) In 70 A.D. Titus and the Roman army marched against Jerusalem and, for all practical purposes, destroyed Old Testament Judaism. It was the worst slaughter in the history of the world with over 1,100,000 killed (Matt.24:21). It would be a day of judgement upon the Jewish Mosaical system and a day of vindication for New Testament Christianity.

Conclusion

1. All of this out of the little book of Joel! We miss a lot when we ignore these last little twelve books.
2. May we forever remember the *"lesson from the locusts"* and continually turn to the Lord with a sincere heart and a humble mind:

"Yet even now" declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, And relenting of evil.

Joel 2:12-13

AMOS:

"Let justice run down like waters" (Amos 5: 24) - Lessons from rich oppressors

Allan Fowell

The Minor Prophets are a study into the way that God worked with Judah, Israel and other nations. They show that God is ruler of this universe and that He has dominion over all nations, tribes and people's. Those whom he used to work through were the prophets. Men chosen by God to, "forth tell." They were the ones taken, often out of ordinary circumstances, to prophecy in extraordinary times. Their prophesying was primarily not interested in the future, although there was a future predictive element present; but for the foremost part they were concerned with the times in which they prophesied. Their sermons dealt with the present as well as with the future. Through the prophet's God says, *"This is what you did, this is what will happen but there is hope."*

It is my assertion that God gave them a message for their time and place in history. That message was colored with Doom and gloom yet contained within a message of future hope and restoration. Some would have a problem with this; I concur with Hampton Keathley who states, with reference to their messages:

*"Modern scholars often claim that these positive messages are later additions by some scribe. They say that it doesn't make sense that some guy would come along and pronounce judgment and then turn right around and promise deliverance. But that is because **they don't believe the Bible as the inspired word of God**, which contains the promises of God. The prophets would usually give a message of doom and gloom and then tell the people about the light at the end of the tunnel to give them hope."*

I want to first, attempt to give a glimpse into the Prophet Amos; date, time, authorship, and historical background and purpose then look at a brief of Chapter 5:24 along with applications for us today in 2011.

Amos

Amos was not a prophet by profession (7:14). Bible says Amos was the farmer-turned-prophet, or the "unprophet prophet." The name "Amos" is from a Hebrew word that means "to carry up or lift up a burden." Amos means "burden-bearer." His burden was to proclaim Israel's sin to her.

We know little of Amos. No other Amos' exist in the Bible. The following is all that is known of the farmer turned prophet. He is from Tekoa (probably the Tekoa of Judah, south of Jerusalem & Bethlehem). Some want to say that he is from a Tekoa of Israel. Shepherds of a particular kind of sheep (nakads), highly prized for their wool, are found in Tekoa of Judah. He was a dresser of sycamore trees. Amos would probably look rugged, reminding us of John the Baptist. He has been called by some the 'Great Reformer', calling Israel to repentance.

Date

The book of Amos is one of the earliest writings of the writing prophets. Amos, the author, declares that he prophesied concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, in fact the "earthquake" was so cataclysmic that Josephus mentions it in Antiquities (Book 9, chapter 10; cf. II Chronicles 26:18-21). The "earthquake" is even mentioned in (Zechariah 14:5) It was at the time when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam II, son of Joash, was king of Israel. It is not known, however, when that earthquake occurred. Since Amos said Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam II was king of Israel, we can arrive at a rather specific time for Amos' prophecies. Uzziah reigned from 783 to 742 B.C., and Jeroboam II ruled from 786 to 746 B.C. That means that sometime between 786 and 742 B.C. Amos received these revelations and delivered them to the nation of Israel. The date that seems right is around 765 BC.

The Times

Amos writes during a period of national optimism (business is booming, boundaries are bulging). Under the surface are greed, injustice, and the trivializing of religion, hypocrisy has run to the core.

Let's dig a little deeper on this. Israel has reached what was probably its height in terms of economic prosperity. Israel enjoyed peace, and international prestige. International peace allowed Israel to gain wealth via international trade. However, excessive wealth led to the creation of a leisured upper class who increasingly adopted a decadent lifestyle. Other forms of unfaithfulness to the covenant were rampant as well, including immorality (2:7) and idolatry (8:14). It was the exploitation of the poor and defenceless by the rich and powerful that God particularly exposed through Amos' oracles and constitutes a frequent theme in the book. Religion was enthusiastically practiced (2:8) but by a people whose fidelity to the covenant was a sham. The nation was characterized by religious hypocrisy.

Purpose/Message of Amos

God calls Amos, even though he lacks an education or a priestly background. Amos' mission is directed to his neighbor to the north, Israel. His messages of impending doom and captivity for the nation because of her sins are largely unpopular and unheeded however, in fact not since the days of Solomon have times been so good in Israel. (Amos 2:4), *"This is what the LORD says: 'For three sins of Judah, even for four, I will not turn back [my wrath]. Because they have rejected the law of the LORD and have not kept his decrees, because they have been led astray by false gods, the gods their ancestors followed.'" (Amos 3:7), "Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets." (Amos 9:14), "I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. **They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit."** 5:24 **"But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream."** This is what God wants, **justice. He talked about "justice in the gate" v.15.***

When we consider the message we are awed by the righteousness of God as compared against the unrighteousness of His chosen people. We really could sum up the message of the book in one word, "**doom.**" Things were so bad that as a result God was fed up with how things were with his people.

Amos 5:24

Amos 5:24, as I see it, epitomises Amos' whole message. This passage is a distinctive plea, an expressive exhortation to the people of Israel, in particular those rich and upper-class oppressors, to act justly and righteously instead of corruptly and immorally. In talking to the Northern kingdom God uses some very strong language on how he felt about the way they treated him in worship. Words like Hate, despise, I do not savour, I will not accept, take away from me the noise of your songs. This, of course is not the only time that God has used such strong language of condemnation of religious practice, (Is 1:14), also note the first few chapters of Malachi. [I am also reminded of the Pharisees in Matthew 5:20 and chapter 23].

In Amos 5: 21-24 God in actual fact was repelled by their show of religion where there should have been righteousness and justice. Why? Because there was no heart in their religion, there was no heart in their worship of the almighty God, in fact they really never served God even in the wilderness thus they would be taken beyond Damascus (Assyria) (Amos 5:25-27).

In this great prophetic book it is noted that God is the God of the entire world. He is not just referred to as the God of Israel. We also note that as the chosen nation they needed to be aware that privilege implies responsibility. Failure to recognize and accept responsibility brings punishment. All are obligated to live up to their own knowledge. Ease and idleness leads, as in Israel's case; to open sin. Sin will not go unpunished. Insincere will-worship brings punishment thus the reason that the prophet states in (4:12), *"Prepare to meet thy God."*

People have not changed. The message "you are living in sin" still causes severe problems for preachers and teachers. God rules and is in active control of the world. When we have no will to obey God our worship to Him is vain. God is patient in warning man, but He does not speak and warn endlessly there comes a time when judgement comes.

Lasting Lessons

- 1- God will judge all nations;
- 2- There is responsibility that goes alongside being God's children.
- 3- You cannot hide from God.
- 4- Worship that is insincere and hypocritical will not cut it with God.
- 5- God is a God of judgement and righteousness and mercy but sin will not go unpunished.

Some further applications:

- **"Establish justice at the Gate."** [5:15]. A modern application of this could be that as Christians we are to adhere to both the moral and social teachings of scripture. Amos was the prophet of 'Social Justice.' The powerful (rich or politicians) are to stop trampling on the less powerful, poor, and naïve by denying them social justice.
- **Sometimes it is the fear of a "social Gospel"** that has immobilised Christians in areas of social concern; while liberalism has neglected the teachings on personal ethics. Amos condemns both of these things.
- [5:24] ***"But let justice roll down like waters; and righteousness like an everlasting stream."*** This kind of justice can only find its meaning in the character of God. It is justice tempered with compassion and mercy. For us we see

this in the character of Christ. In [Exodus 22:26-27] we see such. *"If you take your neighbours cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear him, for I am gracious."* In the New Testament [Luke 4:18-19] Christ came to preach the Gospel to the poor etc. Amos views justice as fairness, cheating and extortion must stop. Justice as viewed by God will show compassion. The application for today is we are not to be like this but also we must not cheat and compromise the word of God, justice and mercy demand that we speak only truth.

- **Generosity probably sums up the message of Amos in a word.** This is not a naïve generosity, however, but a generous spirit that cares enough to get to the facts of the problems and work towards a scriptural solution of them. It is a spirit that finds out who the poor really are and what they need [church benevolence]. But like Christ, it is a spirit that preaches the Gospel to the poor in the spiritual sense the "truth in love."

Let me close with a statement of truth from Jesus:

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, *'And they shall all be taught by God.'* Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.
(John 6:44-45)

Introduction

Seven hundred and fifty years before Christ and approximately twenty eight years before the Assyrian invasion of Israel (722 B.C.), an obscure shepherd-farmer steps out for a brief moment upon the stage of history and, without a hint of hesitation, declares the counsel of Jehovah to the ten-tribed northern nation.

1. Distinguished by a peculiar forcefulness and rural freshness, Amos is unique among the prophets. His language, while not refined, was unmistakably clear. He was a simple man on a simple mission with a simple message:

"Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" (4:12)

- B. Chapter 1:1 immediately informs us as to the time-period of Amos' work - *"in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam (II) son of Joash, king of Israel."* This places the prophecy of Amos at 760-750 B.C., thus, making him a contemporary with Hosea who also preached to the northern nation (see time line, pg.111).

1. The social, moral, and religious conditions of the day could easily be described by the three words: luxury, immorality, and complacency. This was a period of great peace and prosperity during which it seemed that the rich became richer and the poor became poorer. Some lived in opulence and luxury, but often at the expense of the poor and desitute. See 6:4ff; 5:11-12.

ⓐ Immorality abounded. See Amos survey the moral state of the people and shockingly conclude - *"They do not know how to do what is right!"* (3:10). Nor was the political situation much better as evidenced by 5:10.

- b. And, as far as the religious atmosphere of the day - the people were careful to offer their sacrifices and perform all their religious functions, but it had become mere formalism and religious ritual which was totally devoid of meaning (5:21-23).

Externally, the Northern Kingdom was marked by flourishing business, solid economy, and a stable government. But internally - where only God could see - the diagnosis of the nation's condition was grim. Idolatry, injustice, greed, hypocrisy, oppression and arrogance indicted a growing malignancy of deep-seated sin. It was into this sort of corrupt climate that Amos was thrust. Yet, there is no doubt that he was more than equal to the task as he dons the prophets mantle and cries out, "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria" (6:1).

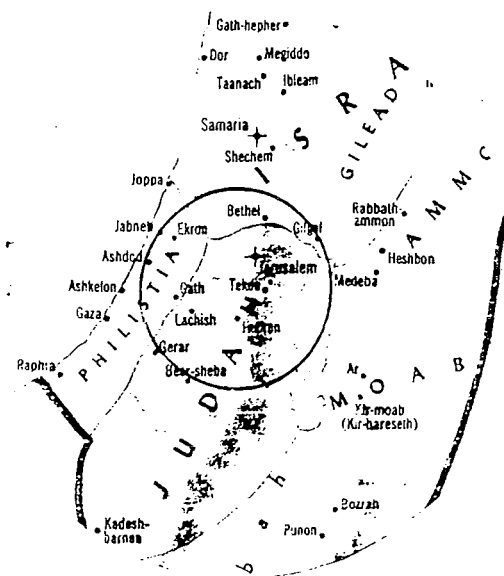
And So...

BODY

I. THE FARM-BOY PREACHER

- A. Amos was not cut out of the normal prophetic mold. In 1:1 he is described as being one of the *"sheep-herders from Tekoa."* Tekoa was a little Judean mountain town, barely a wide spot in the road, about twelve miles south of Jerusalem. It was here that Amos received his divine call described in 7:14-15.

1. Thus, God selected a southern farmer from the rural regions of Judah to go to the wealthy, sophisticated northern city of Bethel as a messenger of truth and righteousness. Amos may not have had impeccable manners, his fashion of dress may not have been flawless, he wasn't well trained in the social orders of etiquette, and his accent of speech may well have been colored by his country upbringing,



but it is unquestioned that he was faithful to the call and courageous as he faced the challenge.

2. Yet, try and imagine the impression that his appearance and preaching would make in the big city. There was an unconventional bluntness about him which must have been extremely annoying to the college-trained professional prophets who were polished orators. Diplomacy and ambiguity just were not a part of Amos' style.
 - a. And don't you know he caused quite a ruckus when he had the audacity to address the refined upper-class social ladies of Israel as a bunch of fat "cows!" (4:1).
 3. Thus, the message Amos was sent to proclaim was not a popular one, nor was he a popular messenger. Not only was he an outsider, but he was an outsider who was utterly unsympathetic to their pampered life styles. As a result, he laid it on the line in no uncertain terms and in a way they weren't used to hearing.
 - a. It is little wonder that Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, informed Amos that he was an unwelcome guest in Israel and that his uncouth preaching would be better suited for the hills of Judah than for the royal places of Bethel. See 7:12-13.
- B. It is interesting to note who it is that God usually chooses to be His spokesmen and to carry His message. True, He has chosen kings and princes (*like Solomon*), the rich and famous (*like Job*), and the powerful and mighty (*like Abraham*). But for every Solomon there has been a Simon, for every Job there has been a John, and for every Abraham there has been Amos.
1. Yes, *farmers and fisherman*, by far, have been the one's commissioned to carry Jehovah's message. And why? To serve as a constant reminder that the success of God's gospel is dependent upon His power and not our own.
 2. When you feel as if you are not worthy enough or not learned enough to teach someone else the gospel - read 1 Cor. 1:26-27 and then ask yourself this question: *Am I doing all I can to spread the good news about Jesus Christ?* Find someone this week and talk to them about spiritual things.
 - a. God used farmers like Amos and fishermen like Peter and He can use YOU if you will let Him.

II. THE LIVING LESSONS OF AMOS

- A. Although Amos preached some 2,700 years ago, he addressed a society to which we are no strangers. He confronted people who had a love affair with "things," who oppressed the poor, who scorned strong preaching, whose worship was ritualistic and whose religion was on the road to apostasy. One would not need to search very far to find these same characteristics in evidence today. Amos' prophecy, therefore, has a particular pertinency for our time.
- X 1. *The problem of luxury and ease.* They had their winter chalet's and their summer cottages. They enjoyed their dwellings of ivory and their great houses (3:15). Extravagance, elegance, and self-gratification were the order of the day. These were people at ease and secure in their material prosperity (6:1), all the while carrying on an *affaire-de-vour* with the "things" of this life.
 - a. If you want a quick barometer of your relationship with God, look at your attitude toward *things*. Do you possess *them*, or do *they* possess *you*? Do you find yourself content with what you have or covetous of what others have? Do you love people and use things or do you love things and use people? Misplaced affections will always bring trouble! See 1 John 2:15-17.
 - b. And how did they get to be so prosperous? See 2:6; 8:4-6. They were constantly searching for new get-rich-quick-schemes which would provide greater luxurious living - usually at the expense of others!
- X 2. *The problem of sound preaching.* Here were people who didn't want to hear what God wanted to tell them (7:12-13). They were not the first nor would they be the last to display such an attitude (Micah 2:6; Hosea 4:6; Isaiah 30:10; Jer. 5:31).
 - a. The challenge faced by Amos and other Old Testament prophets was not unlike the challenge faced by preachers today who must constantly remind themselves of Paul's charge in 2 Timothy 4:1-4 to, "*Preach the word in season and out of season...*"

3. *The problem of worthless worship.* Read 5:21-23. Though the people's actions were *correct*, their attitudes were *corrupt*. The problem, then, was not a lack of activity, but a lack of sincerity (5:24). Israel was guilty of immorality, oppression, selfishness, greed, idolatry, and utter impenitence, yet the people "never missed a service." The problem? Their religious services were offered to please *them* and not God! See 4:4-5.
- Here were people who did not relate religion to morality, or faith to practice or doctrine to life. They would go to services on the Sabbath and then go out all week long and rob the poor, afflict the needy, and ignore Jehovah. As a result, He quickly tired of their sacrifices when there was no change in their lives and no sincerity in their service.
 - See Titus 2:1,10
4. *The problem of indifference.* Read ⁶4-6. The allusion is to the shameful treatment of Joseph by his brethren in Genesis 37. After casting him into a pit, it is said, "*And they sat down to eat bread.*" Total unconcern. Such was typical of the ruling class of Israel. They were selfish, self-centered, and apathetic toward the needs of others. Because of this they would reap the full measure of God's wrath.
- Is there a lesson here for us? You bet! We need to see that **INDIFFERENCE IS A GREATER ENEMY OF TRUTH THAN OPPOSITION**. The devil doesn't have to oppose those who do nothing. Indifference also leads to other sins - worldliness, compromise, liberalism, etc. Jesus censured such an attitude in the church at Laodicea (Rev.3:15-16) and He will censure it here as well!
5. *The problem of religious apostasy.* God had warned these people repeatedly, yet, they refused to listen. Read 4:6-11 and count how many times the phrase - "*Yet you have not returned to Me*" - occurs.
- Today, we must understand that it takes only one generation of non-distinctive preaching for the church to backslide into apostasy. Therefore it is imperative that the call continue to be sounded - "*If any man speak, let him speak as it were the oracles of God!*"

III. OUTLINE

- Prepare To Meet Your God*
- I. PUNISHMENT PROMISED, ch.1-2
 - A. Eight Burdens
 1. "*For three transgressions...and for four.*"
 - II. PENITENCE PROMOTED, ch.3-6
 - A. Three Sermons and One Woe
 1. "*Hear this word...*"
 - III. PROPHECIES PRESENTED, ch.7-9
 - A. Five Visions - Judgement:

1. Locusts	➤ <i>averted</i>
2. Fire	➤ <i>restrained</i>
3. Plumbline	➤ <i>determined</i>
4. Summer fruit	➤ <i>imminent</i>
5. God beside the altar	➤ <i>executed</i>

IV. A CLOSER LOOK

- A. Punishment Promised, ch.1-2. Here in these first two chapters are eight burdens (or messages) of coming judgement upon eight Palestinian nations and the reason for each:

Syria (represented by Damascus) - *for cruelty in war*, 1:3-5
 Philistia (represented by Gaza) - *for enslaving captives*, 1:6-8
 Phoenicia (represented by Tyre) - *for violating a covenant*, 1:9-10
 Edom - *for pursuing his brother without mercy*, 1:11-12
 Ammon - *for severe and senseless cruelty*, 1:13-15
 Moab - *inhuman vengeance*, 2:1-3

Covenant
Nations

Judah - *for rejecting the law of God*, 2:4-5
 Israel - *for injustice, unrighteousness, and apostasy*, 2:6-16

1. Notice that in each denunciation, the Lord begins by saying, "*For three transgressions...and for four.*" Add them up and you have seven (the complete number) - the prophet's way of signifying a full and complete multiplying of sin, thereby deserving the fulness of God's wrath.
 2. Nation by nation, God carefully recounts the transgressions which have accumulated, showing that each nation is ripe for judgement. God doesn't overlook sin!
 - a. Amos forcefully delivers Jehovah's stern warning, "*I will send a fire...*" (1:4), 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5).
- B. Penitence Promoted, ch.3-6. Amos now moves from the *general* to the *specific* in his description of Israel's injustice and God's indictment. Here are three short sermons easily identified by the beginning phrase, "*Hear this word...*" (3:1; 4:1; 5:1). Each sermon states Jehovah's case against the people followed by His concluding "*Therefore...*" (3:11; 4:12; 5:16).
1. Included in this section is the Lord's three-fold appeal for repentance - "*Seek Me that you may live*" (5:4, 6, 14).
 2. Yet, notice in 3:2 the principle underlying the Divine judgement. This is one of the key messages in the book. Judgement is determined according to privilege. Increased privilege means increased responsibility. Israel had been supremely favored, and therefore was supremely responsible. They had abused their privilege. They would pay the price.
- C. Prophecies Presented, ch.7-9. Included here are five visions:
1. *The locust-swarm*, 7:1-3. Judgement is *averted*.
 2. *The devouring fire*, 7:4-6. Judgement is *restrained*.
 3. *The plumbline*, 7:7-9. Here Amos does not intercede for judgement is *determined*. The nation had not measured up.
 4. *The basket of summer fruit*, 8:1-14. This is fruit that is overly ripe and is in jeopardy of perishing. The point? Judgement is *imminent*.
 5. *Jehovah beside the alter*, 9:1-4. Here is the awesome vision of Jehovah Himself "standing beside the alter" - that is, the false alter at Bethel. No symbol is used here as in the four previous scenes. This is the Lord Himself. Divine discipline has come. Judgement is *executed*.

Finally, in the midst of judgement God remembers mercy. He would save a remnant (verse 8). From that remnant He would raise up the kingly rule of David again over all nations and endow them with blessings unlimited. This entire section of 9:11-15 is Messianic and has been fulfilled under Jesus Christ. James quotes this prophecy in Acts 15:14-18 as evidence that Gentiles were to be included in God's church.

Conclusion

1. Amos has been called - "*God's angry man.*" He made his stand and was unmoved in a city where he was an unwelcome visitor and unwanted herald. One cannot help but admire this faithful, courageous farm-boy-prophet who sought to warn the people of impending doom.
 - a. Israel would have done well to listen to this country preacher for in less than a generation the nation fell to Assyria and was carried away into captivity.
2. And may we say just one more thing? The lessons of Amos did not die with Israel. We, too, would do well to read and hear and heed.

Amos Notes

1. 750 years before Christ and 28 years before the Assyrian invasion in 722 B.C...
2. 1:1 – In the days of Uzziah, king of Judah and Jeroboam, king of Israel – 760-750 B.C.
3. The conditions when Amos came on the scene.
 - a. Immorality – 3:10
 - b. Politics were rotten – 5:10
 - c. Religion was outward – not inward – 5:21-23; Isaiah 1:11-15.
4. The new Amos.
 - a. Southern farmer – describe him.
 - b. Preaching was rather blunt – called social ladies of Israel a bunch of fat “cows” (4:1).
 - c. He was asked to leave – 7:12-13.
5. Amos preached some 2,700 years ago but we have the same type of society.
 - a. People had a love affair with “things” – 3:15; 6-1.
 - (1) If you want a quick barometer of your relationship with God, look at your attitude toward things. Do you possess them, or do they possess you? Do you love things and use people? *do you love people and use things?*
 - (2) How did they get so rich – 2:6; 8:4-6.
 - b. They had a problem with sound preaching.
 - (1) They did not want to hear what God had to tell them – 7:12-13.
 - (2) There has always been those with such an attitude – Hosea 4:6; Micah 2:6; Isaiah 30:10; Jeremiah 5:31.
 - (3) Preachers today need to be reminded – II Timothy 4:1-4; I Peter 4:11.

- c. They had a problem with worthless worship.
 - (1) 5:21-23
 - (2) Their problem was a lack of sincerity – 5:24.
 - (3) They were guilty of immorality, oppression, selfishness, greed, idolatry, utter impenitence, yet the people “never missed a service.”
 - (4) Their religious services were offered to please them and not God – 4:4-5.
 - (5) They did not relate religion to faith to practice.
- d. The problem of indifference – 6:4-6.
 - (1) This is an illusion to Joseph’s brothers shameful treatment of him – Genesis 37:24-25. Cast him into a pit “and they sat down to eat bread.
 - (2) Jesus condemns such – Revelation 3:14-17
 - (3) “Indifference is a greater enemy of truth than opposition.”
- e. The problem of religion~~is~~s apostasy.
 - (1) God warned them repeatedly, yet they refused to listen.
 - (2) “Yet have ye not returned unto me ... 5 times in 4:6-13.
 - (3) It just takes one generation of ^{now}~~men~~ – distinctive preaching for the church to backslide into apostasy. cf. Joshua 24:31; Judges 2:7-12.

6. General Outline.

- a. Punishment Promised – chapters 1-2.
 - (1) Syria (Damascus) – 1:3-5.
 - (2) Philistines (Gaza) – 1:6-8.
 - (3) Phoenicia (Tyre) – 1:9-10.
 - (4) Edom – 1:11-12.

- (5) Amnon – 1:13-15.
- (6) Moab -2:1-3.
- (7) Judah – 2:4-5.
- (8) Israel – 2:6-16.
- b. Penitence Promoted – chapters 3-6.
- c. Prophecies Presented – chapters 7-9 – Five Visions.
 - (1) The locust swarm – 7:1-3 – Judgment is averted.
 - (2) The devouring fire. 7:4-6 – Judgment is restrained.
 - (3) The plumb line. 7:7-9 – Judgment is determined.
 - (4) The basket of summer fruit. 8:1-14 – Judgment is imminent.
 - (5) Jehovah beside the alter. 9:1-4 – Judgment is executed.
- 7. Messianic – 9:11-15.

a. Fulfilled under Jesus Christ.

b. James quotes this prophecy in Acts 15:¹³14-18 as evidence the Gentiles were to be included in the Lord's church.

(1) God had foretold, through the prophets, the work he was now doing through Peter, Barnabas & Paul.

(2) He had said that he would build the "Tabernacle of David that the residue of men, who had not known the Lord before, 'even all the Gentiles' upon whom his name is called" should seek after the Lord and now, he had, through these apostles, selected from among the Gentiles "a people for his name." (McHarvey, original commentary on Acts, p. 135).

(3) This refers to the perpetual reign of Jesus, 'the seed of David according to the flesh' (Rom. 1:3).

"When, therefore, Jesus sat down upon his throne in heaven, the Tabernacle of David was rebuilt, and now by the labors of Peter, Barnabas, and Paul the remainder of the prophecy ~~was~~ of Amos was being fulfilled, by the com-

INTRODUCTION:

1. "Amos was a herdsman of an ugly type of sheep with fine wool called a noked. He lived in the village of Tekoa, which is twelve miles south of Jerusalem and six miles south of Bethlehem. Tekoa is a desolate region in the summer, too dry for the cultivation of grain, 2700 feet above sea level, which looks off into the abyss of the Dead Sea, eighteen miles away. Certain seasons out of the year Amos migrated either into the coastal plain or to the Jordan valley to tend sycamore trees which in Palestine produce a sort of fruit that must be pierced to ripen. He went through no other special training to prepare him for his task of being a prophet.

"Amos dates his activity as being during the reigns of Uzziah (called Azariah in 2 Kings 15:1ff), king of Judah (783-742 B.C.), and Jeroboam II, king of Israel (786-746 B.C.), two years before the earthquake, except that it must have been of considerable magnitude, for four hundred years later people were still referring to it. (Zech. 14:5); and Josephus (Antiquities 9.10.4) informs us--we know not how reliably--that it took place in connection with Uzaiah's trespass reported in 2 Chronicles 26:18-21.

"Amos prophesied in Bethel (7:10) and was denounced by Amaziah, the priest, and forbidden to preach further in Israel. Amos' reply was, 'I was not a prophet and I was not a son of a prophet, but God called me to prophesy to Israel.' Hebrew does not express the verb 'to be' under certain circumstances, which leaves the translator with the problem of supplying a verb. It would seem that the past tense may be supplied here, for Amos must describe the activity in which he is engaging as prophesied (7:15), which makes it difficult to conceive of his saying, 'I am no prophets.' Amos thinks of prophets as being raised up by the Lord (2:11) who reveals his secrets to his prophets (3:7,8). Whether Amos prophesied elsewhere other than Bethel as some have argued is uncertain. J. Morgenstern argued that there was only one speech on one occasion. The prophet does not enlighten us concerning what happened to him after his encounter with Amaziah." (The Minor Prophets, Jack Lewis, p. 16,17).

2. The book of Amos reads like today's newspaper because the conditions are so similar.

DISCUSSION:I. THE PROPHET AMOS.

- A. In Amos 1:1-2:1-3, he denounces the sins of the neighboring nations of Israel.
 1. By doing this he attracted the attention of the nation of Israel because they agreed with him.
 2. "Had Amos concluded his message here he might have been most popular, but such was not the case." (O. T. Speaks, p. 383).
- B. Amos next denounces the sins of the children of Israel.
 1. If other wicked nations deserved punishment how much more Israel who were God's covenant people.
 2. "Does judgment come by chance? By a series of rhetorical questions, in which the answer is obviously 'no,' Amos expressed the climactic truth that evil or punishment does not come to a city without God's knowing about it. God reveals it to the prophets. And when God speaks to a prophet, who can help but prophesy? Consequently Amos had no alternative. God had spoken to him. He was under divine compulsion to speak God's word."
 3. The prevalent sins in Israel in a general way were: Injustice, avarice, oppression, immorality, profanity, blasphemy, sacrilege.
 - a. "They sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;" (2:6,7); they oppressed the poor (5:7,11); bribes were accepted (5:12); they traded with dishonest scales and measures (8:5,6).
 - b. The father and son had relations with the same maiden (2:7).
 - c. They shut the mouths of the prophets which denounced them. (2:12; 5:10).
 - d. "A general materialism has settled upon them and holds all in its grip. Women, whose insatiable desire for finery drives their husbands to oppression, stretched out on their couches of ivory, call each to her

husband, 'Mix us another drink' (4:1). The people have their summer houses and winter houses (3:15) and their beds of ivory (6:4). At ease in Zion, the people eat the finest food, anoint themselves with fine oil, and invent instruments of music like David for their entertainment, but do not concern themselves with the approaching ruin of their country. (ch. 6)."
(The Minor Prophets, p. 19).

- C. Famine, drought, blight, pestilence, battle, and earthquake had brought no repentance in their lives (4:7-11) so now God must use sterner measures.
1. By 733 Tiglath Pileser overran and deported the northern and eastern portions of Israel (2 Kings 15:29).
 2. In 722, Samaria was besieged by Shalmaneser V and fell.
- D. In five visions, God's plan for Israel with impending doom is seen:
1. "The locusts (7:1-3). Locusts in Palestine were uncontrollable and considered 'an act of God.' Amos saw in them the threat of God's punishment and by pleading caused the Lord to relent. The great fire devouring the land (7:4-6). Again the prophet pleads and the Lord relents. The plumb line (7:7-9). The Lord announces judgment against His people that involves the doom the house of Jeroboam. Amos does not plead further. The basket of summer fruit (8:1,2). Prophets frequently convey their message by puns not intended to be humorous. From the similarity of summer (qayits) and end (qets) the Lord teaches Amos that the end is at hand. 'The end has come upon my people Israel.' (8:2). Amos sees the Lord standing by the altar and giving the command to smite the capitals and let none escape (9:1). (The Minor Prophets Lewis, p. 17).

II. AMOS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

- A. Stephen appeals to Amos 5:25-27, ACTS 7:41-43
- B. James (Acts 15) uses (Amos 9:11,12) to justify the Gentile mission.

QUESTIONS

TRUE OR FALSE:

1. F Amos was the son of a prophet. 7:14
2. T Amos prophesied two years before the earthquake. 1:1
3. T Amos told about God's destruction upon seven nations besides Israel.
4. T Tyrus was punished because they remembered not the brotherly covenant. 1:9
5. T Israel sold the poor for a pair of shoes. 2:7
6. F Israel was glad the prophets prophesied unto them.
7. T Israel was recognized by God above all the families of the earth. 3:2
8. T God revealed His secret unto His prophets. 3:7
9. T Israel stored up violence and robbery. 3:10
10. T God said He would destroy the Israelites summer and winter houses. 3:15
11. T The kine of Bashan referred to the women of Bashan. 4:1
12. T Israel offered sacrifices to idols because they liked it. 4:5
13. T Because sure destruction was coming Israel was told to prepare to meet thy God. 4:12

14. T "Seek ye me, and ye shall live" said the Lord. 5:4
15. F Judgment and righteousness abounded in Israel. 5:7
16. T Israel abhorred them that spoke uprightly. 5:10
17. F God told them to desire the day of the Lord for it would be a day of light. 5:18
18. T God hated the very things he had commanded Israel to do. 5:21
19. F Israel rejoiced in God and not in their own strength.
20. T Amos was told to leave the land and quit prophesying. 7:12
21. T God showed Amos a basket of summer fruit. 8:1
22. F Israel wanted the Sabbath day to continue. 8:5
23. T The sabbath would end the day the sun went down at noon. 8:9
24. T God threatened a famine in the land. 8:11
25. F The tabernacle of David would never be rebuilt. 9:11

THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Name the two things Amos did for a living. a. Herdsman b. Fatherer of sycamore fruit 7:14
2. During the days of what two kings did he prophesy? Jeziah
Jerabam II 1:1
3. Name the eight nations against which God's destruction was threatened. a. Damascus
b. Goza c. Tyrus d. Edom
e. Ammon f. Moab g. Judah h. Israel
4. Name at least twelve different sins of which Israel was guilty as named in this book.
a. Sold poor 2:6 b. Turn aside way of 2:7 c. Kept not the law 2:4 d. Adultery 2:7
e. Lay on clothes of phyl 2:8 f. Drunkness 2:9 g. Violence 3:10 h. Robbery 3:10
i. Materialism 3:15 j. False worship 5:21 k. False judgment 5:7 l. Bribes 5:12
5. What strong group of people had God destroyed that he used as example to show Israel what he could do to them? Amorites 2:9
6. Name at least nine different things God had done to Israel to get them to repent, but still they had not repented.
a. Cleanse of teeth & no bread

- b. Withheld rain
 c. Rain on one city but not another
 d. Smitten with Plagues
 e. Palmerworm destroyed
 f. Restlessness
 g. Slew young men
 h. Took their horses
 i. Stuck in their nostrils

7. Because God's judgment was sure to come, what was Israel told to do? _____

Prepare to meet thy God

What ought Christians be doing daily? Preparing - Watching -

Math. 24:42

8. Why did Israel desire the day of the Lord? They thought it would
be good
 Would it be a day as they expected? No 5:18-19

9. Why did God hate the things Israel was doing that he had commanded them to do? _____

Outward - no change

How is it possible for us to be doing what God says do and yet God hate it? _____

Yes

10. Name six things Israel was doing that showed the prosperity and ease of the day.

- 6:4-6 a. Beds b. Eating c. Music
 d. Invent Music e. Dance music f. Summer + winter houses

11. How many times did God change his mind about what he would do to Israel when Amos pleaded? Two 7:3, 6

12. Who was the priest of Bethel? Amaziah What did he tell Jereboam about Amos? Leave Israel - 7:11-12

What did he ask Amos to do? He will be killed

13. Did Amos volunteer to be a prophet and warn Israel of her sins or did God call him?

No

14. What was the meaning of the basket of summer fruit? Judgment was here
15. What kind of famine was God going to send into the land? Famine of hunger
God's word As a result of this famine what would people do? wander about
16. God's judgment was so sure that he said "though" Israel do what five things, they could not escape.
- Dig down to hell
 - Climb to heaven
 - Hide in Carmel
 - " in the sea 9:2-4
 - Go into captivity
17. Would God utterly destroy Israel or would there be some left? Some left
 What part would be destroyed? Those that would not hear
18. How is Amos 9:11,12 used by the apostle James in Acts 15:13-17? The receiving of the Gentiles into the church
19. Name as many things as you can from the following verses that are said about God.
 (4:12,13; 5:8,9; 9:5,6)
- Power of God - Creator 4:13
Punishment - Mind Reader - Strengthened 5:9
Controls the land - Builds his stones in heaven - 9:5-6
20. What was the most practical lesson you learned from Amos for our day? Listen and do what God says

Introduction

Seven hundred and fifty years before Christ and approximately twenty eight years before the Assyrian invasion of Israel (722 B.C.), an obscure shepherd-farmer steps out for a brief moment upon the stage of history and, without a hint of hesitation, declares the counsel of Jehovah to the ten-tribed northern nation.

1. Distinguished by a peculiar forcefulness and rural freshness, Amos is unique among the prophets. His language, while not refined, was unmistakably clear. He was a simple man on a simple mission with a simple message:

"Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" (4:12)

- B. Chapter 1:1 immediately informs us as to the time-period of Amos' work - "in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam (II) son of Joash, king of Israel." This places the prophecy of Amos at 760-750 B.C., thus, making him a contemporary with Hosea who also preached to the northern nation (see time line, pg.111).

1. The social, moral, and religious conditions of the day could easily be described by the three words: luxury, immorality, and complacency. This was a period of great peace and prosperity during which it seemed that the rich became richer and the poor became poorer. Some lived in opulence and luxury, but often at the expense of the poor and desitute. See 6:4ff; 5:11-12.

Ⓢ Immorality abounded. See Amos survey the moral state of the people and shockingly conclude - "They do not know how to do what is right!" (3:10). Nor was the political situation much better as evidenced by 5:10.

- b. And, as far as the religious atmosphere of the day - the people were careful to offer their sacrifices and perform all their religious functions, but it had become mere formalism and religious ritual which was totally devoid of meaning (5:21-23).

And So...

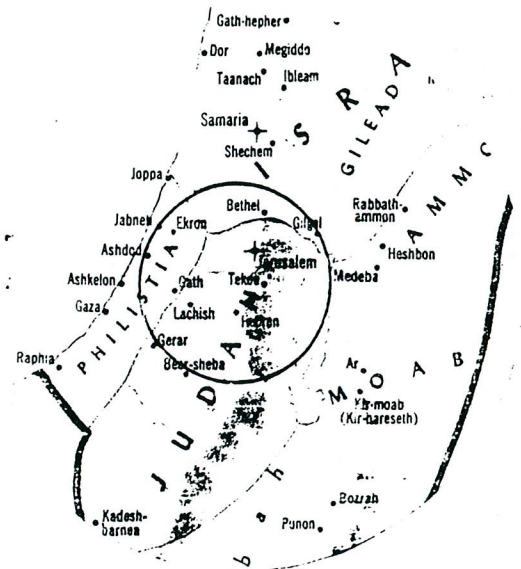
Externally, the Northern Kingdom was marked by flourishing business, solid economy, and a stable government. But internally - where only God could see - the diagnosis of the nation's condition was grim. Idolatry, injustice, greed, hypocrisy, oppression and arrogance indicted a growing malignancy of deep-seated sin. It was into this sort of corrupt climate that Amos was thrust. Yet, there is no doubt that he was more than equal to the task as he dons the prophets mantle and cries out, "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria" (6:1).

BODY

I. THE FARM-BOY PREACHER

- A. Amos was not cut out of the normal prophetic mold. In 1:1 he is described as being one of the "shepherders from Tekoa." Tekoa was a little Judean mountain town, barely a wide spot in the road, about twelve miles south of Jerusalem. It was here that Amos received his divine call described in 7:14-15.

1. Thus, God selected a southern farmer from the rural regions of Judah to go to the wealthy, sophisticated northern city of Bethel as a messenger of truth and righteousness. Amos may not have had impeccable manners, his fashion of dress may not have been flawless, he wasn't well trained in the social orders of etiquette, and his accent of speech may well have been colored by his country upbringing,



but it is unquestioned that he was faithful to the call and courageous as he faced the challenge.

2. Yet, try and imagine the impression that his appearance and preaching would make in the big city. There was an unconventional bluntness about him which must have been extremely annoying to the college-trained professional prophets who were polished orators. Diplomacy and ambiguity just were not a part of Amos' style.
 - a. And don't you know he caused quite a ruckus when he had the audacity to address the refined upper-class social ladies of Israel as a bunch of fat "cows!" (4:1).
 3. Thus, the message Amos was sent to proclaim was not a popular one, nor was he a popular messenger. Not only was he an outsider, but he was an outsider who was utterly unsympathetic to their pampered life styles. As a result, he laid it on the line in no uncertain terms and in a way they weren't used to hearing.
 - a. It is little wonder that Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, informed Amos that he was an unwelcome guest in Israel and that his uncouth preaching would be better suited for the hills of Judah than for the royal places of Bethel. See 7:12-13.
- B. It is interesting to note who it is that God usually chooses to be His spokesmen and to carry His message. True, He has chosen kings and princes (*like Solomon*), the rich and famous (*like Job*), and the powerful and mighty (*like Abraham*). But for every Solomon there has been a Simon, for every Job there has been a John, and for every Abraham there has been Amos.
1. Yes, farmers and fisherman, by far, have been the one's commissioned to carry Jehovah's message. And why? To serve as a constant reminder that the success of God's gospel is dependent upon His power and not our own.
 2. When you feel as if you are not worthy enough or not learned enough to teach someone else the gospel - read 1 Cor. 1:26-27 and then ask yourself this question: *Am I doing all I can to spread the good news about Jesus Christ?* Find someone this week and talk to them about spiritual things.
 - a. God used farmers like Amos and fishermen like Peter and He can use YOU if you will let Him.

II. THE LIVING LESSONS OF AMOS

- A. Although Amos preached some 2,700 years ago, he addressed a society to which we are no strangers. He confronted people who had a love affair with "things," who oppressed the poor, who scorned strong preaching, whose worship was ritualistic and whose religion was on the road to apostasy. One would not need to search very far to find these same characteristics in evidence today. Amos' prophecy, therefore, has a particular pertinency for our time.
- W 1. The problem of luxury and ease. They had their winter chalet's and their summer cottages. They enjoyed their dwellings of ivory and their great houses (3:15). Extravagance, elegance, and self-gratification were the order of the day. These were people at ease and secure in their material prosperity (6:1), all the while carrying on an affaire-de-vour with the "things" of this life.
 - a. If you want a quick barometer of your relationship with God, look at your attitude toward things. Do you possess them, or do they possess you? Do you find yourself content with what you have or covetous of what others have? Do you love people and use things or do you love things and use people? Misplaced affections will always bring trouble! See 1 John 2:15-17.
 - b. And how did they get to be so prosperous? See 2:6; 8:4-6. They were constantly searching for new get-rich-quick-schemes which would provide greater luxurious living - usually at the expense of others!
- W 2. The problem of sound preaching. Here were people who didn't want to hear what God wanted to tell them (7:12-13). They were not the first nor would they be the last to display such an attitude (Micah 2:6; Hosea 4:6; Isaiah 30:10; Jer. 5:31).
 - a. The challenge faced by Amos and other Old Testament prophets was not unlike the challenge faced by preachers today who must constantly remind themselves of Paul's charge in 2 Timothy 4:1-4 to, "Preach the word in season and out of season..."

3. The problem of worthless worship. Read 5:21-23. Though the people's actions were correct, their attitudes were corrupt. The problem, then, was not a lack of activity, but a lack of sincerity (5:24). Israel was guilty of immorality, oppression, selfishness, greed, idolatry, and utter impenitence, yet the people "never missed a service." The problem? Their religious services were offered to please them and not God! See 4:4-5.
- a. Here were people who did not relate religion to morality, or faith to practice or doctrine to life. They would go to services on the Sabbath and then go out all week long and rob the poor, afflict the needy, and ignore Jehovah. As a result, He quickly tired of their sacrifices when there was no change in their lives and no sincerity in their service.
- 5:21-24
Isa. 1:11-15
4. The problem of indifference. Read 6:4-6. The allusion is to the shameful treatment of Joseph by his brethren in Genesis 37. After casting him into a pit, it is said, "And they sat down to eat bread." Total unconcern. Such was typical of the ruling class of Israel. They were selfish, self-centered, and apathetic toward the needs of others. Because of this they would reap the full measure of God's wrath.
- a. Is there a lesson here for us? You bet! We need to see that INDIFFERENCE IS A GREATER ENEMY OF TRUTH THAN OPPOSITION. The devil doesn't have to oppose those who do nothing. Indifference also leads to other sins - worldliness, compromise, liberalism, etc. Jesus censured such an attitude in the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:15-16) and He will censure it here as well!
5. The problem of religious apostasy. God had warned these people repeatedly, yet, they refused to listen. Read 4:6-11 and count how many times the phrase - "yet you have not returned to Me" - occurs.
- yet
- a. Today, we must understand that it takes only one generation of non-distinctive preaching for the church to backslide into apostasy. Therefore it is imperative that the call continue to be sounded - "If any man speak, let him speak as it were the oracles of God!"

III. OUTLINE

- Prepare To Meet Your God
- I. PUNISHMENT PROMISED, ch.1-2
 - A. Eight Burdens
 - 1. "For three transgressions...and for four."
 - II. PENITENCE PROMOTED, ch.3-6
 - A. Three Sermons and One Woe
 - 1. "Hear this word..."
 - III. PROPHECIES PRESENTED, ch.7-9
 - A. Five Visions -

1. Locusts	- averted
2. Fire	- restrained
3. Plumbline	- determined
4. Summer fruit	- imminent
5. God beside the altar	- executed

IV. A CLOSER LOOK

- A. Punishment Promised, ch.1-2. Here in these first two chapters are eight burdens (or messages) of coming judgement upon eight Palestinian nations and the reason for each:

Syria (represented by Damascus) - *for cruelty in war*, 1:3-5
 Philistia (represented by Gaza) - *for enslaving captives*, 1:6-8
 Phoenicia (represented by Tyre) - *for violating a covenant*, 1:9-10
 Edom - *for pursuing his brother without mercy*, 1:11-12
 Ammon - *for severe and senseless cruelty*, 1:13-15
 Moab - *inhumane vengeance*, 2:1-3

Covenant
Nations

Judah - *for rejecting the law of God*, 2:4-5
 Israel - *for injustice, unrighteousness, and apostasy*, 2:6-16
 (151)

1. Notice that in each denunciation, the Lord begins by saying, "*For three transgressions...and for four.*" Add them up and you have seven (the complete number) - the prophet's way of signifying a full and complete multiplying of sin, thereby deserving the fulness of God's wrath.
 2. Nation by nation, God carefully recounts the transgressions which have accumulated, showing that each nation is ripe for judgement. God doesn't overlook sin!
 - a. Amos forcefully delivers Jehovah's stern warning, "*I will send a fire...*" (1:4,7,10,12,14; 2:2,5).
- B. Penitence Promoted, ch.3-6. Amos now moves from the *general* to the *specific* in his description of Israel's injustice and God's indictment. Here are three short sermons easily identified by the beginning phrase, "*Hear this word...*" (3:1; 4:1; 5:1). Each sermon states Jehovah's case against the people followed by His concluding "*Therefore...*" (3:11; 4:12; 5:16).
1. Included in this section is the Lord's three-fold appeal for repentance - "*Seek Me that you may live*" (5:4,6,14).
 2. Yet, notice in 3:2 the principle underlying the Divine judgement. This is one of the key messages in the book. Judgement is determined according to privilege. Increased privilege means increased responsibility. Israel had been supremely favored, and therefore was supremely responsible. They had abused their privilege. They would pay the price.
- C. Prophecies Presented, ch.7-9. Included here are five visions:
1. *The locust-swarm*, 7:1-3. Judgement is *averted*.
 2. *The devouring fire*, 7:4-6. Judgement is *restrained*.
 3. *The plumbline*, 7:7-9. Here Amos does not intercede for judgement is *determined*. The nation had not measured up.
 4. *The basket of summer fruit*, 8:1-14. This is fruit that is overly ripe and is in jeopardy of perishing. The point? Judgement is *imminent*.
 5. *Jehovah beside the alter*, 9:1-4. Here is the awesome vision of Jehovah Himself "standing beside the alter" - that is, the false alter at Bethel. No symbol is used here as in the four previous scenes. This is the Lord Himself. Divine discipline has come. Judgement is *executed*.

Finally, in the midst of judgement God remembers mercy. He would save a remnant (verse 8). From that remnant He would raise up the kingly rule of David again over all nations and endow them with blessings unlimited. This entire section of 9:11-15 is Messianic and has been fulfilled under Jesus Christ. James quotes this prophecy in Acts 15:14-18 as evidence that Gentiles were to be included in God's church.

Conclusion

1. Amos has been called - "*God's angry man.*" He made his stand and was unmoved in a city where he was an unwelcome visitor and unwanted herald. One cannot help but admire this faithful, courageous farm-boy-prophet who sought to warn the people of impending doom.
 - a. Israel would have done well to listen to this country preacher for in less than a generation the nation fell to Assyria and was carried away into captivity.
2. And may we say just one more thing? The lessons of Amos did not die with Israel. We, too, would do well to read and hear and heed.

OBADIAH:

“For thy violence against thy brother” (Obadiah 10) - Lessons from sibling rivalry

Glen Tattersall

The boots of foreign soldiers pound the streets of Jerusalem; the screams of terrified women and the cries of men are heard echoing through the city, as their number killed or captured for a life of slavery. The once mighty people of Israel have been brought very low.

From a distance the people of Edom rush to look on with gladness and rejoicing in their heart. Then they too, come close to join in harassing the people and to take their share of the spoil. With great glee, they finally see themselves ascendant over the people of Jacob.

The book of Obadiah is the account of the rivalry between two brothers Jacob and Esau, or as they came to be known - Israel and Edom, reaching its terrible climax. In his condemnation of Edom's hatred to his brother, God inspired Obadiah to record: *“For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.”* (Obadiah 10-14).

To understand what occurred we need to go back in time and remember the two twin sons born to Isaac and Rebekah - Esau and Jacob; and how that God foretold that the elder would serve the younger (Genesis 25:22,23). We remember how Esau cared not for future or spiritual matters, but rather sold his birthright for a bowl of vegetable stew. When it came time for Isaac to bestow his blessings on his sons; Jacob with his mother's prompting acted deceitfully to ensure that the firstborn's would be given to him. We remember that fearing for his life, Jacob fled from the face of Esau to return 20 years later seeking peace. Though at the end Jacob and Esau were personally reconciled, the animosity of the descendants of Esau towards Jacob's people grew. Years later as the descendants of Jacob fled from Egyptian captivity to the Promised Land, the Edomites would not even allow them passage through their land (Numbers 20:14-18).

In the ebb and flow of events, Edom and Israel would wrestle for advantage, but it was the hatred Edom had to Israel so gleefully expressed when Jerusalem was invaded by foreigners that provoked Obadiah's message of doom on this spiteful brother.

Sibling rivalry - what great harm and heartache it can cause! We do not have time to consider the rivalry between Cain and Abel: Leah and Rachel: or Joseph and his brothers; for we must consider the harm that rivalry can do to us, who are the children of God and brethren together.

As we consider our standing before God there is a great unity we share for we are created equal in God's image, and indeed all races stem from Adam. The apostle Paul refers to this when speaking to the Athenian philosophers in Acts 17:26 *"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation."* Racism has no place in the purposes of God. Although skin colour and other features may differ slightly, what is within - our intellect, our emotions, our spirit are all the same.

Both sexes are also equal before God. Eve was made to complement Adam, not to be above or below the man. Whilst men and women have different roles, they are nonetheless equal in God sight. Wherever anything approaching true Christianity has gone in the world the lot of women has always been improved.

Given this equality, the Golden Rule, to treat others as we would be treated, has constantly fought against bigotry, prejudice, and inequity.

Unfortunately we are also unified in another sense in that we are together condemned in sin. Sin is the great separator, for sin is evil and God is thoroughly good. Isaiah 59:2 states: *"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."* Consider Adam and Eve - they were told not to eat of the forbidden fruit lest they die (Genesis 2:16,17); but they sinned and on that day, spiritually died. It is worth noting it only took one sin.

Each of us have sinned and many times at that. Sins of commission whereby we have deliberately done what God has forbidden and sins of omission where we have failed to do what God has commanded. Some trust in their own goodness but the Scriptures declare that our righteousness is as filthy rags: *"But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."* (Isaiah 64:6). Spiritually we are dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1), and God shows no partiality. Considering we are all under the same condemnation, how foolish it is to puff ourselves up one against another!

On a much brighter note, when we become Christians we are united in Christ. By the grace of God, we are able to be forgiven of our sins for Jesus came to be the sacrifice for the sins of the world, not for a select few but for all. This lesson had to be learned by the early church for it was not until Peter met Cornelius and the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles that it was understood that the gospel was indeed for all (Acts 10:34,35). This good news was, and is, to be universally shared (Mark 16:15).

When we obey the gospel our sins are forgiven, we become the children of God (1 John 3:1), we become the brethren of Christ (Matthew 12:49, 50). We need to remember however that though united in Christ we only stand by God's grace: *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

In the sight of God all are equal - of one blood; each lost in our sins - but redeemed through the one sacrifice. Given this equality there should be no rivalry among God's people - as Abraham once stated *"for we be brethren"* - right??

As we consider the theme of sibling rivalry unfortunately there are many threats to our unity as God's children. The greatest of these threats is carnal mindedness. This is the desire to put self interest and satisfaction first in our thinking and affections. It is that

worldly focus which is condemned in 1 John 2:16: *"...the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life..."* Though outwardly expressing spirituality, it afflicts the Christian whose mind looks to the here and now as the only reality. They are blinded to things eternal and spiritual truths. As Paul warns in Ephesians 4:17-19: *"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."*

It was this kind of thinking that led Eve to eat the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:6). It caused Esau to trade his birthright for a bowl of stew (Genesis 25:30-32). And it motivated Judas to sell out his Lord for 30 pieces of silver. Unless we leave this kind of thinking behind it will lead to all kinds of evil work and schisms amongst God's people - backbiting, gossip, factions, and bitterness. It was this worldly thinking that Paul condemned in 1 Corinthians 3:3: *"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"* When Christians remain carnally minded they will inevitably become the enemies of God and His people. Listen to what James declares - *"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."* (James 4:1-4)

Another cause of sibling rivalry within the church is the desire for prominence or the pursuit of selfish ambition. We see so many countries today brought low and racked with division because of the desire of a few for power and dominance. More tragically this also can happen amongst God's people. We could think of how Aaron and Miriam challenged Moses in Numbers 12:1,2: *"And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, 'Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?' And the LORD heard it."*; or how James and John with a little help from their mother wanted high positions in the kingdom of God: *"And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory... And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John."* (Mark 10:35-37,41). Diotrephes is another example of such thinking whereby he wanted to cast out brethren who would threaten his control (3 John 9,10).

True esteem comes through faithful service, but some want to take a shortcut and lay hold on that which they have not earned. In order to gain and maintain their position they have to manipulate, manoeuvre, and coerce. They crave attention or power and will do anything to attain it. So much damage has been done to the Lord's church by brethren motivated by their selfish ambition.

Envy is yet another threat to the unity of the church. It was the motivation for Cain killing Abel - *"Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."* (1 John

3:12). Abel had what Cain didn't - God's approval. It was that which caused Esau's resentment of Jacob. Jacob had what Esau didn't - Isaac's blessing (Genesis 27:41).

Envy and its twin jealousy, is a curse amongst brethren in Christ. Proverbs 14:30 states: *"A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones."* Envy, being the desire for what someone else has, or resenting them for having it; whereas jealousy is the suspicion or fear of being displaced by a rival, or resenting another caused by envy. We are warned against such evil thoughts: *"Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."* (Galatians 5:26).

Had Edom not been flawed in these areas it may have been a great nation, but because it did not overcome it was cursed by God. As we consider our relationship with one another, how can we avoid the fate of Edom?

In order to ensure that rivalry does not destroy us there are three areas that we must give the utmost attention to. The first of these is that we must develop the mind of Christ. In writing to the Philippian church, Paul wrote: *"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name."* (Philippians 2:1-9). From this passage we learn that we must put others before us in love. We are the children of the one Father; and unlike the father of Esau and Jacob, God is impartial to His children. We are brothers and sisters together. Therefore our Father wants for us to put the welfare and needs of others before us be they: physical, spiritual, or emotional. Let us be honest and say that this at times is easier said than done, therefore we must give it the most earnest prayer and strive to practice it towards all.

This same Scripture also teaches us that we must empty ourselves of self. The illustration Paul uses is that of Jesus himself: for though He is equal with the Father, yet in order to achieve our salvation He emptied Himself and submitted Himself to the Father. In all that He did, Jesus worked in harmony, not competition with the other members of the Godhead.

So much strife is caused because we fail to do what Jesus did! We want to protect our ego, our pride, our position, and when these are threatened, tension, hostility and rivalry result. Rather than focussing on being the best sons they could be, Esau and Jacob vied for the best blessing for themselves.

Emptying self of self is what Paul did and hence could write: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* (Galatians 2:20).

As God's children we need to focus on putting the Lord first. Consider the example Paul set for us in Philippians 1:13-18: *"So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace,*

and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." Out of envy, in their twisted way of reasoning, some were preaching the Gospel thinking to add to Paul's burdens. Yet rather than taking offence Paul rejoiced that whatever their motive, the Gospel was being preached. He understood that it was not about him, but rather the furtherance of the Lord's work that mattered. We need to have this same attitude in the church today. It is better to suffer wrong than allow ourselves to become a source of contention. Consider Paul's rebuke of the Corinthian Christians: *"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? ... Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren."* (1 Corinthians 6:1,7,8). It would be better for them to be taken advantage of, rather than to pursue their rights and harm the body of Christ.

When worldly thoughts of ambition and envy trouble our mind, consider the example of Jesus and humble our hearts so that His work and His church be not harmed. It is not about us, it is about Him.

Maintaining unity amongst brethren also requires us to serve. Remember when James and John wanted to sit beside Jesus in His kingdom (Mark 10:36,37)? This angered the other apostles. Jesus was faced with a crisis; if it were not dealt with properly; simmering rivalry would destroy the unity of the apostles and greatly hinder the proclamation of the Gospel. Jesus countered their request and the ensuing tension by teaching that greatness came through service: *"But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."* (Mark 10:42-45). He set Himself as an example of service the night before He was crucified, when rather than having His disciples serve Him, He took a bowl of water and girded Himself with a towel, and washed their feet (John 13:4,5,12-15). How can any strive for advantage over their brethren when the Lord has set us such an example?

Our service needs to be with quietness (Matthew 6:1-4) and without any thought of earthly reward (Luke 14:12-14). How much rivalry between brethren would be resolved if we could learn to serve quietly, rather than wanting to be served openly?

Repentance on our part is also required in order to maintain unity. We are all on a path of transition from being carnally minded to being Christlike. Perhaps we are familiar with the song "None of Self, and all of Thee"? It gives us the transition of this path, but most of us are still striving to attain the mind where it is "None of self and all of Thee". Changing our thinking, our heart, our ego takes time. We are at different points on this road, which is why we need to be longsuffering and forgiving towards one another.

When a seed of ungodly rivalry germinates within our thoughts, deal with it promptly, before it takes root and strangles our heart. Spend much time in earnest and honest

prayer; confess our sins and struggles to God and to others; consciously override our bruised egos and empty ourselves of self and strive to work with all. These things are not easy, but God who sees the heart struggling to do right will strengthen and bless.

When Jacob and Esau both vied for their Father's blessing, they had no idea how much the ripples of this conflict would hurt their lives and that of others. The two nations that came from them would be at odds with one another for centuries, until Edom's intense hatred for Israel would provoke Obadiah's prophecy of doom.

Rivalry between God's people can have a more devastating effect. Brethren striving with one another can quickly seize on reasons to justify their hurt. Factions develop, souls are lost, and the Lord's church is harmed.

It is only with spiritual maturity that we can rise above this evil. By understanding that in God's eyes, in whatever we may do, we only stand by His grace. We need to be aware of how easily a spirit of rivalry can threaten our unity, and we must have the humility, the faith, and the courage to take whatever steps are necessary to preserve the unity of the body.

As we strive to save souls, to glorify God, and to help our brethren, we do well to consider the words of the apostle Paul who stated: *"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."* (1 Corinthians 10:32-33).

The Book of OBADIAH

Introduction

- A. *Brief but basic* - all but sums up this half-page prophecy. With its twenty-one verses, Obadiah is the shortest of the Old Testament collection and is the only book of the first thirty-nine not referred to in the New Testament.
 1. It is short but none-the-less sharp in its denunciation of sin; pointed but pertinent to modern times; brief but basic in exposing God's grand scheme of redemption for mankind. It is a book whose text needs to be studied, whose message needs to be observed, and whose lessons need to be applied.
- B. The Prophetic *Who, What, and When*.
 1. The *WHO* is Obadiah (1:1). Exactly who this Obadiah was no one can ascertain for certain. There are at least twelve different "Obadiahs" mentioned in the Old Testament as the name was common among the Jews and meant - "*Servant of the Lord.*" Whoever he was, he was a humble servant of Jehovah who realized that God's *work* was more important than God's *worker* and, thus, he allowed his personality to fade into the background.
 - a. It is commonly thought, and we concur, that this Obadiah was the same Obadiah who was sent on a mission by the good king Jehosaphat (871-845) to revive the spirit of true worship and restore the teaching of the Law (2 Chron. 17:7).
 - b. If this is correct it would make Obadiah a contemporary of Elijah and Elisha.
 2. The *WHAT* is the Edomites (1:1). Although the Edomites and Israelites were blood brothers, they were bitter enemies. Sibling rivalry between twin brothers Jacob and Esau led to national enmity between their respective descendants, Israel (Jacob) and Edom (Esau). See Genesis 25:21-34. Thus, the Edomites were Esau's descendants, and their country was Mount Seir, a mountainous region extending from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akabah (today occupied in part by Israel and Jordan).
 - a. The Edomites were a constant thorn in Israel's side. They were profane, proud, fierce and cruel. They carried a persistent, bitter, gloating spite against their brother Israel. Such a feeling had expressed itself time and again in the history of the two peoples as evidenced by Edom's refusal to the courteous appeal of Moses in Numbers 20:14-22. That instance was never forgotten.
 - b. In the days of Obadiah, this undying Edomite feeling of anti-Jacobism had flamed out more violently than ever. When disaster was facing Jerusalem, instead of befriending or at least sympathising, the people of Edom had indulged the passive cruelty of looking on with gloating satisfaction (vs.11-12) and had egged on the plunderers.
 - 1) Such Edomite venom was later recalled by the Jewish captives in Babylon in Psalms 137:7.
3. The *WHEN* is approximately 845 B.C. If this date is correct it makes Obadiah the earliest of the prophets as he lived during the reign of good king Jehoshaphat. During his day religious reform was at its peak in Judah. He had sent out princes and priests and Levites to teach the people the Law of the Lord (one of those sent was Obadiah - 2 Chron. 17:7). But now Jehoshaphat was dead and his son Jehoram was the new king. See 2 Chron. 21:1-6.
 - a. It was during Jehoram's rule that God brought judgement upon Judah by allowing her enemies to attack and plunder her (2 Chron. 21:16-17).
 - b. It is to this specific invasion that Obadiah alludes as he witnesses the unconcern and treachery of Edom and is thereby called to issue the divine forecast against Esau's descendants.

BODY

I. THE OUTLINE

- A. The long-accumulating guilt of Edom had reached the breaking point and divine retribution was now determined. The key verse must be 15 - "*As you have done, it will be done to you.*"
 1. Here we are meant to learn emphatically the principle of divine poetic justice. As Edom had dealt treacherously and robbed and shown violence and sought the ut-

ter destruction of Judah, so now would come poetic justice - their penalty would correspond to their iniquity as one line of poetry corresponds to another. For example:

- a. Edom had siezed the chance to rob Judah (vs.13); therefore Edom would be robbed (vs.6).
 - b. Edom had sought the utter destruction of Judah (vs.12-14); therefore Edom would be utterly destroyed.
2. Yes, poetic justice. The Hebrew writer said it another way - *"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."*

The Prophet of Poetic Justice

"As You Have Done, It Will Be Done To You"

I. THE DESTRUCTION OF EDMOM, vs.1-16

- A. Her Arraignment, vs.1-9
- B. Her Indictment, vs.10-14
- C. Her Sentence, vs.15-16

II. THE SALVATION OF SPIRITUAL ISRAEL, vs.17-21

- A. The Reign of the Redeemed

II. THE TEXT

A. The Destruction of Edom, vs.1-16.

1. *Her arraignment*, vs.1-9. Here we immediately have:

The method of communication	➤	<i>"The vision of Obadiah"</i>
The value of the message	➤	<i>"Thus says the Lord God"</i>
The subject of the message	➤	<i>"Concerning Edom"</i>

Here follows in verses 3-4 a description of Edom's basic sin - PRIDE. The country of Edom lay in a rugged mountain region noted for its steep canyons and impregnable strongholds. Because of this she had a self-satisfied security and even openly boasted of her strategic invulnerability. In her pride and confidence she bragged - *"Who shall bring me down?"* :

- a. Jehovah's answer in verse 4 to the swaggering pride of Edom's deceived heart is among the classics of literary beauty. The lesson? The destiny, doom, and deliverance of all nations are in the hand of God.
 - b. In verse 5 God asks two rhetorical questions. The whole point is to contrast what man would do to Edom and what God was going to do. If the destruction of Edom were designed and executed by men there would be some *"gleanings"* left over, there would be some jewels left hidden. But not so when God is finished! See verse 6.
 - c. Strength, wealth, and now wisdom, vs.8-9. Proud in her own conceit she became a fool!
2. *Her Indictment*, vs.10-14. Verse 10-11 lays down the reason for Edom's indictment - *"Because of violence to your brother Jacob..."*
- a. In verses 12-14 Edom is sternly warned and placed under three specific charges: *"LOOK NOT," "ENTER NOT," STAND NOT."* Read these verses and note the progressive nature of Edom's sin. Her passive callousness had given way to active alliance with Jerusalem's destroyers.
 - 1) She rejoiced over Jerusalem's destruction. Next,
 - 2) She partook herself. And finally,
 - 3) She caught and imprisoned the refugees.
 - b. This would not be the last time Edom would respond this way, thus, causing God's prophets to again echo Jehovah's Obadiah warning. See Isaiah 63:1-6; Jer. 49:7-13; Ezek. 35:1-10.
3. *Her sentence*, vs.15-16. Here is Edom's *"Day of the Lord"* - a day when Jehovah's judgemental powers would be manifest. Here is Edom reaping what she sowed. Here is Edom facing future annihilation.

- a. And how did it come about? For centuries Petra, the capital city of Edom, was one of the most important stopping places along the east-west trade route. However, during the days of the Roman Empire a new caravan route opened far to the north. No longer did the camel caravans pass through the mountains of Seir. As a result the great trade and commercial center of Edom, which was dependent upon outside tourism, was now cut off from the main highway and eventually the city became deserted.
 - b. Yes, Jehovah works in mysterious ways. No great battles. No mighty armies. Only the changing of a trade route and the once proud, powerful and rich city of Edom became a hollow shell. By 150 A.D. the Edomites had disappeared from the pages of history. Obadiah was right! (vs.18)
- B. The Salvation of Spiritual Israel, vs.17-21. In this section Obadiah reveals the future exaltation and glory of Israel. The kingdom of Mount Seir would be abased while the kingdom of Mount Zion would be glorified.
1. Verse 17 - Mount Zion represents Messianic deliverance. Mount Zion would be made up of those people who are "*holy*," i.e., set apart, sanctified and redeemed. "*The house of Jacob*" refers not to the physical descendants only, but to the future house of the redeemed. See Luke 1:33; Gal. 3:29.
 2. Verse 19-20 - The ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy concerning Jacob and Joseph possessing even Edom is tied directly to the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers 24:17-18. There it is prophesied that Edom (Seir) is to be a possession of Israel when "*the star comes forth out of Jacob and the scepter out of Israel*."
 - a. This prophecy looks to a Messianic fulfillment in which those in Edom (and other nations) who would escape would do so in Mount Zion under the Messiah.
 - b. "*The deliverers who climb Mount Zion*," (vs.21) would be the apostles and messengers of the first century who would bring the salvation message to the people of Edom and to all peoples.
 - c. Those who would obey the gospel would then be in the kingdom, a special kingdom belonging to the Lord (vs.21b). A kingdom through which the redeemed would rule the world (Reve. 5:9-10).

III. THE LIVING LESSONS OF OBADIAH

- A. Is there any message of permanent value in this short half-page prophecy? I believe there is. Note these three:
- 1. *Pride goes before destruction* (Prov. 16:18). Wasn't that true of Edom? Isn't that still true today? C.S. Lewis says of pride: "*this one area is the basic anti-God attitude*." Pride is the taproot of most of our sin!
 - a. There is no greater instrument of Satan than pride. Where one has died a fornicator, drunkard, and a liar - 10,000 have died guilty of the sin of pride. Pride causes more homes to be broken, more sermons to go unheeded, more churches to be divided, and more souls to go unsaved than any other thing. Read passages like Prov. 26:12; James 4:6; Matt. 20:25-28.
 - 2. *The violence of silence*, vs.11. On a national scale, Edom refused to assume its rightful role as a brother's keeper. Edom refused to get involved. She stood "*aloof*" and committed the sin of omission. She was indifferent toward the needs of her brethren. She didn't care.
 - a. Note 1 Cor. 12:12-14, 25-26. The church is the body of Christ. Each member of the body needs the other members for strength, encouragement and nourishment (Hebrews 10:25).
 - b. Question - Are you actively looking out for your brethren in the Lord? Or, are you like Edom being only concerned about yourself. Seek out a fellow Christian who needs help and give it. Look for those who are sick and need encouragement and offer it. Find one in need of your support and lend it.
 - c. Someone may say - "*That's not what Christianity is all about*." Friend, that's EXACTLY what Christianity is all about! Christianity is letting your light shine. Christianity is caring about others. Christianity involves GETTING INVOLVED!
 - 3. *Sowing and reaping*. Note verse 15. See also Gal. 6:7-8.

Conclusion

1. Yes, although the book of Obadiah is the shortest of the prophetic writings, it is certainly *multum in parvo*, much in little. (155)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Obadiah's prophecy deals with a foreign nation - Edom- rather than Judah.
2. A background glimpse at Edom will help one to appreciate and understand this book better.
 - a. Edom is another name for Esau, who was the brother of Jacob. (Gen. 36:1,9,19) Thus the Edomites were his descendants.
 - b. Edom means "the red region" and the name was probably connected with "the red rocks that are abundant in the territory." "Edom occupied a narrow mountainous strip of territory (mountain peaks range up to 5,700 feet) about 100 by 20 miles in dimensions, located on the eastern side of the Palestinian rift valley ...The present-day visitor to Petra, which Burgon called 'a rose red city - half as old as time,' gets some taste of the ruggedness of this land. The buildings to be seen date from the Roman period, but the site itself is much older. One enters Petra by the Sik, a narrow canyon more than a mile in length with vertical walls often not more than 30 feet apart. Here a few men could hold off an entire army. The deep colored sandstone cliffs which change colors by the hour are most impressive. Out of these cliffs the Nabateans carved their temples. It is one of the most impressive sights in the world. Petra became a caravan city that had few fears of successful attack and lost its significance only when new routes took trade via Palmyra, far to the north." (The Minor Prophets, p. 91,92)
 - c. The relation of Edom to Israel had been most unfriendly - quarrels between relatives are usually bitter.
 - (1) She refused to allow Israel to pass through her land when coming out of Egypt. (Num. 21:21ff).
 - (2) Saul had wars with Edom. (1 Sam. 14:47).
 - (3) She joined forces with Moab and Ammon against Judaea. (2 Chron. 20:22).
 - (4) In the days of Jehoram, Edom revolted against Judah and set up their own king. (2 Chron. 21:8).
 - (5) But it was their behavior during the Babylonian Period that was most bitterly remembered.
3. Let's consider.

I. THE BOOK OF OBADIAH.

- A. Obadiah means "servant of the Lord."
 1. There are 13 men with this name in the Old Testament and it's nearly impossible to identify this prophet with any of them.
 2. Obadiah was a prophet against Edom.
- B. The book can well be divided into two sections:
 1. Edom will surely fall through the invasion of disloyal allies. Obadiah 1-14.
 2. There will be the restoration of Israel. Obadiah 15 - 21.
- C. Obadiah is the shortest book in the Hebrew Bible and is one of the seven Old Testament books (Nahum, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and Obadiah) not quoted or echoed in the New Testament.
- C. The message of the book reveals:
 1. Edom's confident pride. "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?" (Verse 3)
 - a. Edom's confidence is false because God tells her that even though she soars like an eagle and sits her nest among the stars she will still be brought down. v. 4
 - b. God reveals the extent of her destruction when he shows that thieves leave a little behind and grape gatherers leave the gleanings, but she will be completely destroyed. v. 5,6.
 - c. In that day he shows that:
 - (1) Her allies will betray her. v. 7.

- (2) Her stronghold will fall.
- (3) Her wise men have failed. v. 8.
- (4) Her "mighty men...shall be dismayed..." v. 9.
- 2. Edom's violence against and mistreatment of her brother Judah when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem.
 - a. She refused to aid Judah when Jerusalem was plundered. v. 10, 11.
 - b. She rejoiced and gloated over what happened to Judah. v. 12, 13.
 - c. She shared the spoils that were taken. v. 13c.
 - d. She cut off those that tried to escape and delivered them up to the enemy. v. 14.
- 3. The day of the Lord will be the reckoning day (referring here to Edom's destruction.)
 - a. Edom will receive the reward of her own deeds and will fade away as though she never existed. v. 15, 16.
 - b. On the other hand the house of Jacob will be restored to her land and shall "possess their possession." v. 17-21.

II. PRACTICAL LESSONS FROM THE PROPHET OBADIAH.

- A. Obadiah had firm faith in the divine providence which "will work out its purpose in history." cf. Rom. 8:28.
- B. The great lessons on sin.
 - 1. The chief element of sin is pride. It looks to self and like Edom says "Who shall bring me down to the ground?" v. 3c.
 - 2. Its chief manifestation is mistreatment of others as seen in Edom's treatment of his brother.
 - 3. Its final issue is retribution as we shall reap what we sow - "as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee..." v. 15b.
- C. "Obadiah is a standing rebuke to the spirit who prefers not to become involved in the problems of others..." (Lewis).
 - 1. Edom refused to help Judah with her problems. v. 10, 11.
 - 2. The priest and Levite refused to get involved with the needs of the certain Samaritan. Lk. 10:25-37.
 - 3. How many today refused to get involved? What about you?
 - 4. Christians are to "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Gal. 6:2.
- D. "It is even more a rebuke to him who finds a sadistic joy in the misfortunes of another." (Lewis).
 - 1. Edom rejoiced over Judah's misfortunes.
 - 2. The Gentiles described by Paul found pleasure in those that did evil. Rom. 1:32.
 - 3. Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity" (1 Cor. 13:6a) and Christians suffer with those that suffer and rejoice with those that rejoice. (1 Cor. 12:26).
- E. The prophet makes it quite clear that the only place of absolute safety is not in strongholds, mighty and wise men, mighty nations, but in God.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 5 THE MINOR PROPHETS - OBADIAH

TRUE OR FALSE

- 1. _____ Obadiah prophesied against Edom.
- 2. _____ Pride was Edom's main sin.
- 3. _____ Edom dwelleth in a mountain stronghold.

4. _____ Edom did not exalt herself as an eagle.
5. _____ Edom's allies had deceived her.
6. _____ The wise men of Edom would be spared.
7. _____ Edom is another name for Esau who was the brother of Jacob.
8. _____ Edom had actually joined forces with the enemy against Jacob "thy brother"
9. _____ Edom was grieved over what happened to Jacob.
10. _____ Edom was receiving the reward of her own wrongdoing.
11. _____ There was to be no deliverance.
12. _____ Edom was to be devoured as stubble.
13. _____ The possessions of Edom were to be taken by others.
14. _____ The kingdom was to be the Lord's.
15. _____ Obadiah is the only one chapter book in the Old Testament.

DISCUSSION AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. What does the name Obadiah mean? _____
2. Is the book of Obadiah quoted or echoed in the New Testament? _____
Can you name the six other Old Testament books not quoted or echoed in the New Testament? a. _____ b. _____ c. _____
d. _____ e. _____ f. _____
3. Edom felt secure against destruction because she dwelt where? _____
_____ In her pride what did she say? _____

4. God told Edom that though she did what two things she would still fall?
a. _____
b. _____
5. Verse 7 reveals that the main ones that would bring about her downfall would be who?

6. Name the things that God accused Edom of doing against Jacob as revealed in verses 10 - 14.
a. _____

- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____
- f. _____
- g. _____
- h. _____
- i. _____

7. Obadiah saw all that was happening as whose providence? _____
8. In the final verses, Obadiah presents final victory and deliverance for whom?

9. What would the house of Jacob be? _____
What would the house of Joseph be? _____
Who would be the stubble? _____
10. How complete would the destruction of Edom be? _____

11. What do you think Obadiah has to say to the man who does not want to get involved in helping others? _____
12. What does Obadiah have to say to the man who rejoices in the misfortunes of others?

The Book of OBADIAH

Introduction

- A. *Brief but basic* - all but sums up this half-page prophecy. With its twenty-one verses, Obadiah is the shortest of the Old Testament collection and is the only book of the first thirty-nine not referred to in the New Testament.
1. It is short but none-the-less sharp in its denunciation of sin; pointed but pertinent to modern times; brief but basic in exposing God's grand scheme of redemption for mankind. It is a book whose text needs to be studied, whose message needs to be observed, and whose lessons need to be applied.
- B. The Prophetic *Who, What, and When*.
1. The WHO is Obadiah (1:1). Exactly who this Obadiah was no one can ascertain for certain. There are at least twelve different "Obadiahs" mentioned in the Old Testament as the name was common among the Jews and meant - "*Servant of the Lord*." Whoever he was, he was a humble servant of Jehovah who realized that God's *work* was more important than God's *worker* and, thus, he allowed his personality to fade into the background.
 - a. It is commonly thought, and we concur, that this Obadiah was the same Obadiah who was sent on a mission by the good king Jehosaphat (871-845) to revive the spirit of true worship and restore the teaching of the Law (2 Chron. 17:7).
 - b. If this is correct it would make Obadiah a contemporary of Elijah and Elisha.
 2. The WHAT is the Edomites (1:1). Although the Edomites and Israelites were blood brothers, they were bitter enemies. Sibling rivalry between twin brothers Jacob and Esau led to national enmity between their respective descendants, Israel (Jacob) and Edom (Esau). See Genesis 25:21-34. Thus, the Edomites were Esau's descendants, and their country was Mount Seir, a mountainous region extending from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akabah (today occupied in part by Israel and Jordan).
 - a. The Edomites were a constant thorn in Israel's side. They were profane, proud, fierce and cruel. They carried a persistent, bitter, gloating spite against their brother Israel. Such a feeling had expressed itself time and again in the history of the two peoples as evidenced by Edom's refusal to the courteous appeal of Moses in Numbers 20:14-22. That instance was never forgotten.
 - b. In the days of Obadiah, this undying Edomite feeling of anti-Jacobism had flamed out more violently than ever. When disaster was facing Jerusalem, instead of befriending or at least sympathising, the people of Edom had indulged the passive cruelty of looking on with gloating satisfaction (vs.11-12) and had egged on the plunderers.
 - 1) Such Edomite venom was later recalled by the Jewish captives in Babylon in Psalms 137:7.
3. The WHEN is approximately 845 B.C. If this date is correct it makes Obadiah the earliest of the prophets as he lived during the reign of good king Jehoshaphat. During his day religious reform was at its peak in Judah. He had sent out princes and priests and Levites to teach the people the Law of the Lord (one of those sent was Obadiah - 2 Chron. 17:7). But now Jehoshaphat was dead and his son Jehoram was the new king. See 2 Chron. 21:1-6.
 - a. It was during Jehoram's rule that God brought judgement upon Judah by allowing her enemies to attack and plunder her (2 Chron. 21:16-17).
 - b. It is to this specific invasion that Obadiah alludes as he witnesses the unconcern and treachery of Edom and is thereby called to issue the divine forecast against Esau's descendants.

BODY

I. THE OUTLINE

- A. The long-accumulating guilt of Edom had reached the breaking point and divine retribution was now determined. The key verse must be 15 - "*As you have done, it will be done to you.*"
 1. Here we are meant to learn emphatically the principle of divine poetic justice. As Edom had dealt treacherously and robbed and shown violence and sought the ut-

ler destruction of Judah, so now would come poetic justice - their penalty would correspond to their iniquity as one line of poetry corresponds to another. For example:

- a. Edom had siezed the chance to rob Judah (vs.13); therefore Edom would be robbed (vs.6).
 - b. Edom had sought the utter destruction of Judah (vs.12-14); therefore Edom would be utterly destroyed.
2. Yes, poetic justice. The Hebrew writer said it another way - "*Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.*"

The Prophet of Poetic Justice

"As You Have Done, It Will Be Done To You"

I. THE DESTRUCTION OF EDMON, vs.1-16

- A. Her Arraignment, vs.1-9
- B. Her Indictment, vs.10-14
- C. Her Sentence, vs.15-16

II. THE SALVATION OF SPIRITUAL ISRAEL, vs.17-21

- A. The Reign of the Redeemed

II. THE TEXT

A. The Destruction of Edom, vs.1-16.

1. *Her arraignment*, vs.1-9. Here we immediately have:

The method of communication	➤	<i>"The vision of Obadiah"</i>
The value of the message	➤	<i>"Thus says the Lord God"</i>
The subject of the message	➤	<i>"Concerning Edom"</i>

Here follows in verses 3-4 a description of Edom's basic sin - PRIDE. The country of Edom lay in a rugged mountain region noted for its steep canyons and impregnable strongholds. Because of this she had a self-satisfied security and even openly boasted of her strategic invulnerability. In her pride and confidence she bragged - "*Who shall bring me down?*" :

- a. Jehovah's answer in verse 4 to the swaggering pride of Edom's deceived heart is among the classics of literary beauty. The lesson? The destiny, doom, and deliverance of all nations are in the hand of God.
 - b. In verse 5 God asks two rhetorical questions. The whole point is to contrast what man would do to Edom and what God was going to do. If the destruction of Edom were designed and executed by men there would be some "*gleanings*" left over, there would be some jewels left hidden. But not so when God is finished! See verse 6.
 - c. Strength, wealth, and now wisdom, vs.8-9. Proud in her own conceit she became a fool!
2. *Her Indictment*, vs.10-14. Verse 10-11 lays down the reason for Edom's indictment - "*Because of violence to your brother Jacob...*"
- a. In verses 12-14 Edom is sternly warned and placed under three specific charges: "*LOOK NOT,*" "*ENTER NOT,*" "*STAND NOT.*" Read these verses and note the progressive nature of Edom's sin. Her passive callousness had given way to active alliance with Jerusalem's destroyers.
 - 1) She rejoiced over Jerusalem's destruction. Next,
 - 2) She partook herself. And finally,
 - 3) She caught and imprisoned the refugees.
 - b. This would not be the last time Edom would respond this way, thus, causing God's prophets to again echo Jehovah's Obadiah warning. See Isaiah 63:1-6; Jer. 49:7-13; Ezek. 35:1-10.
3. *Her sentence*, vs.15-16. Here is Edom's "*Day of the Lord*" - a day when Jehovah's judgemental powers would be manifest. Here is Edom reaping what she sowed. Here is Edom facing future annihilation.

- a. And how did it come about? For centuries Petra, the capital city of Edom, was one of the most important stopping places along the east-west trade route. However, during the days of the Roman Empire a new caravan route opened far to the north. No longer did the camel caravans pass through the mountains of Seir. As a result the great trade and commercial center of Edom, which was dependent upon outside tourism, was now cut off from the main highway and eventually the city became deserted.
 - b. Yes, Jehovah works in mysterious ways. No great battles. No mighty armies. Only the changing of a trade route and the once proud, powerful and rich city of Edom became a hollow shell. By 150 A.D. the Edomites had disappeared from the pages of history. Obadiah was right! (vs.18)
- B. The Salvation of Spiritual Israel, vs.17-21. In this section Obadiah reveals the future exaltation and glory of Israel. The kingdom of Mount Seir would be abased while the kingdom of Mount Zion would be glorified.
1. Verse 17 - Mount Zion represents Messianic deliverance. Mount Zion would be made up of those people who are "*holy*," i.e., set apart, sanctified and redeemed. "*The house of Jacob*" refers not to the physical descendants only, but to the future house of the redeemed. See Luke 1:33; Gal. 3:29.
 2. Verse 19-20 - The ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy concerning Jacob and Joseph possessing even Edom is tied directly to the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers 24:17-18. There it is prophesied that Edom (Seir) is to be a possession of Israel when "*the star comes forth out of Jacob and the scepter out of Israel.*"
 - a. This prophecy looks to a Messianic fulfillment in which those in Edom (and other nations) who would escape would do so in Mount Zion under the Messiah.
 - b. "*The deliverers who climb Mount Zion,*" (vs.21) would be the apostles and messengers of the first century who would bring the salvation message to the people of Edom and to all peoples.
 - c. Those who would obey the gospel would then be in the kingdom, a special kingdom belonging to the Lord (vs.21b). A kingdom through which the redeemed would rule the world (Reve. 5:9-10).

III. THE LIVING LESSONS OF OBADIAH

- A. Is there any message of permanent value in this short half-page prophecy? I believe there is. Note these three:
- 1. *Pride goes before destruction* (Prov. 16:18). Wasn't that true of Edom? Isn't that still true today? C.S. Lewis says of pride: "*this one area is the basic anti-God attitude.*" Pride is the taproot of most of our sin!
 - a. There is no greater instrument of Satan than pride. Where one has died a fornicator, drunkard, and a liar - 10,000 have died guilty of the sin of pride. Pride causes more homes to be broken, more sermons to go unheeded, more churches to be divided, and more souls to go unsaved than any other thing. Read passages like Prov. 26:12; James 4:6; Matt. 20:25-28.
 - 2. *The violence of silence*, vs.11. On a national scale, Edom refused to assume its rightful role as a brother's keeper. Edom refused to get involved. She stood "*aloof*" and committed the sin of omission. She was indifferent toward the needs of her brethren. She didn't care.
 - a. Note 1 Cor. 12:12-14, 25-26. The church is the body of Christ. Each member of the body needs the other members for strength, encouragement and nourishment (Hebrews 10:25).
 - b. Question - Are you actively looking out for your brethren in the Lord? Or, are you like Edom being only concerned about yourself. Seek out a fellow Christian who needs help and give it. Look for those who are sick and need encouragement and offer it. Find one in need of your support and lend it.
 - c. Someone may say - "*That's not what Christianity is all about.*" Friend, that's EXACTLY what Christianity is all about! Christianity is letting your light shine. Christianity is caring about others. Christianity involves GETTING INVOLVED!
 - 3. *Sowing and reaping.* Note verse 15. See also Gal. 6:7-8.

Conclusion

1. Yes, although the book of Obadiah is the shortest of the prophetic writings, it is certainly *multum in parvo*. much in little. (155)

JONAH:

“Salvation is of the Lord” (Jonah 2: 9) - Lessons from a fish’s belly

Kah Khin Hon

Introduction and background

The name Jonah means ‘Dove’ and it is quite appropriate because a dove is used in those days to sent messages – A messenger from God.

Jonah was a real person and he lived during the time of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25).

Jesus himself mentioned Jonah in Matt 12:38-40. So Jonah is a real person that was swallowed by a real fish and all the things that were mentioned in the Book of Jonah are real historical event and did occur.

When I first read Jonah, I had a very bad impression of him. I still do, but having done some studying, I am able to understand Jonah as a person better. You see historically, the Assyrians have inflicted a lot of sufferings upon the Jewish people and Jonah being a Jew hates the Assyrians. So when God asks Jonah to go and preach to the Assyrians (in this case – Nineveh); it did not go down well with Jonah. He prefers that God destroy them rather than to save them. So one can understand why Jonah decided to run away.

The standard outline of the Book of Jonah is:-

- Chapter 1:- Disobedience, Running away from God.
- Chapter 2:- Prayer, Running to God.
- Chapter 3:- Preaching, Running with God
- Chapter 4:- Complaint, Running ahead of God.

There are a lot of things which we could learn from the Book of Jonah.

We learned about the sort of person Jonah is.

We learned about the nature of our God - about how our God is a gracious God, a merciful God, a kind God and a patient God who is long suffering.

Anyway, let’s get into the Book of Jonah.

Chapter 1 – Disobedience – Running away from God.

Read verses 1 to 3

Point No.1 – You cannot run away from God.

Nineveh is North East, Tarshih is west (South West of Spain). God tells Jonah to go to Nineveh which is northeast but Jonah runs away from God and goes west. Can he run away from God? NO!! You cannot run away from God.

Today a lot of people think that they can run away from God. They know about God, they know what God wants them to do but they don’t want to do what God wants them to do.

They think that by shutting God out of their lives or by ignoring God they can run away from God. What we need to do is to inform them that they cannot run away from God. Eventually God will get to everyone - Hebrews 9:27 "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgement". Everyone will come face to face with God, so we cannot run away from God.

Jonah tried but he found out that he also cannot run away from God.

Point No.2 – God is not the only one that can open doors, Satan can too.

In verse 3 – Jonah went down to Joppa. Conveniently a ship is there going to Tarshish. Conveniently he has the money to pay for the fare. Conveniently he went down into it and conveniently it set sail. Did God do all that? No! It was Satan.

We can look at society today; for example when a man and a woman commit adultery. A lot of the time both the man and the woman never sets out to commit adultery. It just happens conveniently that the man and the woman meets, conveniently the man and the woman has to work together in the same office, conveniently they have to work late. See, God is not the only one that can open doors; Satan can as well. What we need to do is to resist the devil and he will flee away from you (James 4:7).

Coming back to Jonah, he tries to run away from God. So what did God do?
Read verses 4 to 9.

Point No.3 – Other people can suffer as a consequence of someone else's sin.

These sailors did nothing wrong. They were just going about their daily lives. Jonah sinned by not obeying God and because of Jonah's sin; these sailors' lives are put in danger. In fact we can learn a lot about these sailors and we can learn more about the nature of Jonah. Read verses 10 to 16.

These sailors were courageous. They were more concern with Jonah's life than Jonah was concern about their lives. When they found out that Jonah was running away from God and that the sea would become calm if they throw Jonah overboard, what did they do? Verse 13 says "nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land.....". They tried hard to save Jonah. They knew that throwing Jonah overboard means the end of Jonah. Jonah on the other hand wasn't as concerned about the sailors' lives. I mean if he really wanted to save the sailors' lives he could actually just jump overboard!!

Point No.4 – You cannot fight against God

When the sailors were told that the only way God would calm the seas down was for them to throw Jonah overboard, they decided that they knew better. They rowed hard to try to get to land. Even though their intentions were noble, it was not what God wants them to do. They found out that you cannot fight against the will of God – however noble their intentions were.

Remember with Daniel and the lion's den, what happened to those who went against God and accused Daniel; they were themselves cast into the lion's den.

Remember with Queen Esther. What happened to Haman who went against God and tried to kill the Jews? He was hung instead of Mordecai. So you cannot fight against God.

These sailors having found that it was God's will to throw Jonah overboard tried to do things their way. In the end, they had to comply.

So when Jesus said in John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me", He meant exactly just that. A lot of denominations in the world however think that they know better. They pray to the Virgin Mary, they pray to St Peter or St John or St Paul or even Mother Theresa. They are in fact fighting against God and his will.

When the apostle Peter said to the people on the day of Pentecost that they need to Repent and be Baptised, he means exactly just that. Again a lot of denominations in the world think that they know better. They say that all you have to do is just believe and call upon the Lord and you will be saved. What do you think that they are doing? They are simply fighting against God and we learn from here that you cannot fight against God. You will lose – everytime!. You cannot fight against God.

Point No.5 – God will be glorified regardless.

Look at verse 16. God used Jonah to accomplish his will and taught these sailors about God even though Jonah had not intended to do so.

Let's read verse 17. God uses a lot of things to accomplish his task. In this case, it is a big fish. Now there's a lot of conjecture as to what this great fish is. Some may say it is a whale which could get as big as 40m long or a whale shark which could get to be 15m long. Both of these fishes could easily fit Jonah in its belly.

However it could also be a one off special fish which God created specially for Jonah. I mean God could create the world and the universe so what's so difficult about creating a fish for this one occasion.

Now here is something that reveals the sort of person Jonah is. In verse 17 we read that "Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights". So how long was he in the belly? Three days and three nights!!!

Talk about being stubborn!! It's only after 3 days and 3 nights in the fish belly that Jonah decided to give in and started to pray to God. I often wondered what he did during the 3 days and 3 nights. Could he be sulking? That's a long time to be sulking. I am sure that it would not have been pleasant in the fish belly. Later on in chapter 2, we read about what it is like to be in the fish's belly.

If it was me, after 3 minutes, I would be begging God to help me. Here Jonah lasted 3 days and 3 nights before he gave in and prayed to God. Jonah was a very stubborn man indeed.

Chapter 2 – Prayer, Running to God.

Read verses 1 to 4. The worst thing that can ever happen to anyone is this: - when we have been cast out of God's sight. Of all the things that's happening to Jonah – the floods surrounding him, weeds wrapped around his head, etc. etc, he considers this to be the worst.

The same can be said for us. Because of our sins we are separated from God. We were out of God's sight. But that does not need to be so because our Lord and saviour, Jesus Christ came down and gave his life for us as a ransom to pay our debt (Mark 10:45). As a result we are now justified (Rom 3:24) before God and is now able to be reconciled to Him (Rom 5:10). Isn't that wonderful what our Lord is willing to do for us!!

Continuing with our reading - verses 5 to 9. Now Jonah recognised that he has no hope and there is nothing he can do. He is totally powerless. So he completely cast himself at the mercy of God.

Sometimes it's the same with us. God says He cares about us yet we don't really trust God enough to completely put our faith into Him. It is when we are at the lowest point, at our weakest; in other words, sometimes we have to hit rock bottom before we realised that the true source of strength comes from God – just like what Jonah is doing now. God's patience and kindness is demonstrated yet again here, in that Jonah has been disobedient, yet God still hears his prayer and still answers his prayer. Verse 10 "So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land".

Chapter 3 – Preaching. Running with God.

Now Jonah is going to put his will in harmony with God.

Let's read verse 1 to verse 3. Notice how God never harps on the past. God didn't say "I told you to go to Nineveh and you didn't go, now I am telling you again...". God just simply comes to Jonah, never reminded him of what has happened in the past and said, "Arise, go to Nineveh...". How gracious is our God!!!

Continuing with our reading - verse 3 to 9.

If there was ever a great preacher who is able to convert people; Jonah must be the greatest. No one else in the bible could convert **everyone** in the one city. Everybody from the king down to the peasant repented; turned from their evil ways and from their violence.

They heard the message and they believed and more than that, they repented and because they repented, what did God do? Read verse 10 – "The God saw their works that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it".

In Jeremiah 18:7-10 "The instance I speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation, against whom I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. And the instant I speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight, so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good, with which I said I would benefit it."

It is never too late to repent. If we repent and turn to God, we will be forgiven. If we do not repent, well, we will not be forgiven.

Chapter 4 – Complaint. Running ahead of God.

Now you would think that the deliverance of Nineveh from doom is the climax of the story. But this is not the case. In fact this is a common characteristic of God. Remember the

story of the prodigal son, you would think that because the prodigal son has come to his senses and realise his error and being allowed to reconcile with his father, that it's the end of the story. Instead Jesus puts in a twist about the elder brother. Here it's the same. The deliverance of Nineveh is not the end of the story. The most important lesson from the book of Jonah deals with God's people; in this case it is Jonah.

One can do the will of God without doing it with the right attitude.

Let's read verse 1.

Why was Jonah angry? Well, Jonah wanted God to judge Nineveh because they are the enemy of the Jews. The prophets Hosea and Amos both prophesized that Assyria would invade and defeat Israel (Hosea 11:5 and Amos 5:27). So Jonah told God why he was angry.

Read verse 2 - . A gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness, one who relents from doing harm – isn't that exactly what we want our God to be!!! Yet, because of these good qualities of God, Jonah was angry.

There's a saying "**The heart of every problem, is the problem of the heart**" and that where Jonah's problem is.

Sometimes even the best of people, people such as Jonah, wishes calamity on the wicked, but God does not. How often do you hear people say "I wish you would just drop dead" or "I think you should just go and jump off the Westgate".

Jonah was so angry he said in verse 3 "Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me for it is better for me to die than to live".

But God did not rebuke Jonah, instead in verse 4 – Then the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?". So God proceeded to teach Jonah.

Read verse 5 and 6. This is the only time we read that Jonah was happy. Why was he happy? Because he was physically comfortable!! He doesn't care about what God wants. He was happy about the plant but not happy about the repenting city of Nineveh.

Read verse 7 to verse 9 - God asked Jonah in verse 4 "it is right for you to be angry". Now God is asking Jonah "is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" Jonah's answer was the same "I am so angry I could die".

Read verse 10 - This verse shows the contrast between the way man thinks and the way God thinks.

Man becomes concerned and disturbed when that which directly affects him is compromised (In Jonah's case, it's the plant). But when that which is much greater value and does not directly affect him is compromised (in this case it's the souls of the Ninevites), he is unconcerned.

In other words, Mankind can be very self-centred. So what is more important? My own comfort or the souls of many many other people; even our enemies.

God says in verse 11 "and should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand."

To God, the souls of people are worth everything.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:26 “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

This needs to be our primary concern – our own soul and the souls of others.

John 3:16 – “ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

The book of Jonah. It is one of the greatest book of the old testament. There are so many lessons which we could learn for it.

Conclusion

To conclude my lesson, earlier I describe the standard outline of the book:

Chapter 1:- Disobedience, Running away from God.

Chapter 2:- Prayer, Running to God.

Chapter 3:- Preaching, Running with God

Chapter 4:- Complaint, Running ahead of God.

I want to ask all of you now, where are you in your live now with respect to God? It is my prayer and hope that you are not running away from God. Certainly pray and run to God with all our needs and be out there preaching and running with God. It is my prayer that you do not complain and definitely not run ahead of God.

The Book of JONAH

Introduction

The little book of Jonah tells the story of what occurs when God says, "Go!" and man says "No!" It is an account of a patriot-prophet who resigns his position and goes A.W.O.L. without Divine permission. And, interestingly enough, it illustrates how it is possible for everyone to obey God except the one person you would expect - the preacher!

1. However, the book involves so much more. Generally, we focus so much attention on the "*fish*" that we fail to distinguish the real significance of the book. Forget the fish. We have looked so long at the great fish that we have failed to see the great God!
 - a. At the heart of these four chapters is not the man or the fish or even the city itself. Those ingredients are there, yes, but only because they relate to the central theme of the prophecy - *the compassion of Jehovah for all peoples!*
2. Here we see the Old Testament parable of the Prodigal Son. Here we see God is not so much a respecter of persons as He is a respecter of character. Here we see how God is slow to punish and quick to pardon when there is penitence. Here we see God's care for all His creation. And here, as in no other book, is observed the divine longsuffering - longsuffering with an entire nation; longsuffering with one man.
 - a. The central message of Jonah is nowhere better summarized than by the words of Peter in his second letter 3:9:

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

- b. An Old Testament prophet needed to learn that lesson. Nearly 3,000 years later we need to do the same.

DY

.. FACT or FICTION?

- A. The book of Jonah - is it real history or mythical allegory? Was Jonah a real person? Was he really swallowed by a great fish as the book declares? Did he really convert a whole city thus diverting Divine judgement? Or... is the book merely fictional? Suffice it to say that the book of Jonah, more than any other book of scripture, has been the butt of the scoffer and a prime target for the critic. Consider these positive evidences for the historicity of Jonah and his book:
 1. *5* Is Jonah historical? He certainly is! Read 1:1. Do we read anywhere else of such a person? We certainly do! See 2 Kings 14:25. Now king Jeroboam II was a real enough person. He was, in fact, the greatest and longest reigning monarch of the northern nation. And all of his advances and military accomplishments took place exactly as predicted by his prophetic advisor - Jonah, the son of Amittai.
 - a. As a result Jonah was probably known to the Assyrians as a political advisor to king Jeroboam.
 - b. The 2 Kings passage also fixes a time to the ministry of Jonah - 790-750 B.C. (the reign of Jeroboam II), thus, making him a contemporary with Hosea and Amos.
 2. Is the narrative historical? There is nothing in the text to suggest otherwise. This is no mythical - "*Once upon a time in a faraway land...*" Rather, the book describes real people, places, and events in the historical context. It is a narrative of true happenings; a small bit of real history.
 - a. Furthermore, it is unreasonable to believe that a Jew would ever invent a story representing God showing mercy towards the Gentiles.
 3. Is the fish historical? Could it happen? The obvious answer for all who believe in God, is that *of course* it could! - for if God created *all* the fish in the seas, He could very easily create one specifically for the purpose of swallowing and preserving Jonah. Has it ever happened before? Yes!
 - a. Consider the account related by the scientific editor of the *Journal des Debats* of Paris:

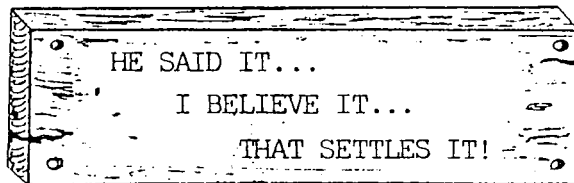
"In February 1891, the whale-ship *Star of the East* was in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands, and the look-out sighted a large sperm whale three miles away. Two boats were lowered, and in a short time one of the harpooners was enabled to spear the fish. The second boat attacked the whale, but was upset by a lash of its tail, and the men thrown into the sea, one being drowned, and another, James Bartley, having disappeared, could not be found. The whale was killed, and in a few hours the great body was lying by the ship's side, and the crew busy with the axes and spades removing the blubber. They worked all day and part of the night. Next day they attached some tackle to the stomach, which was hoisted on deck. The sailors were startled by spasmodic signs of life, and inside was found the missing sailor, doubled up and unconscious. He was laid on the deck and treated to a bath of sea-water which soon revived him; but his mind was not clear, and he was placed in the captain's quarters, where he remained two weeks a raving lunatic. He was kindly and carefully treated by the captain, and by the officers of the ship, and gradually gained possession of his senses. At the end of the third week he had entirely recovered from the shock, and resumed his duties.

"During his sojourn in the whale's stomach Bartley's skin, where exposed to the action of the gastric juice, underwent a striking change. His face, neck, and hands were bleached to a deadly whiteness, and took on the appearance of parchment. Bartley affirms that he would probably have lived inside his house of flesh until he starved, for he lost his senses through fright and not from lack of air."

- b. For those still skeptical, I would advise a trip to Washington, D.C. and the Smithsonian Institute's Museum of Natural History where off to the left of the main entrance lobby is displayed a 30,000 pound sperm whale captured off the Florida Keys in 1912. It is 45 feet in length having a mouth 38 inches wide and at the time of its capture held a 1,500 pound black fish in it's stomach.
- c. To argue - "*Could it happen?*" in reference to Jonah's experience is on par with the mentality of arguing the possibility of the four minute mile. IT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE! To argue otherwise is to go against all fact and reason.

B. Jesus and Jonah.

- 1. Perhaps the greatest evidence for the historicity of the Jonah account is that Christ conclusively confirms it! See Matt. 12:38-41 and Luke 11:30-32.
 - a. As to whether it *could* happen we have seen that it could. As to whether it *did* happen we have the confirmatory word of the infallible Christ Himself. Like the popular bumper sticker:



One more thing...

The ability or inability to accept a miracle depends on whether or not one spells his God with a capital "G."

How do you think Jonah spelled it?

II. THE OUTLINE

- A. The little story is in four parts which correspond to the four chapters. It can be easily divided in several ways -

Ch. 1 - Running <i>From</i> God	Disobedience	Fleeing From God
Ch. 2 - Running <i>To</i> God	Preservation	Praying To God
Ch. 3 - Running <i>With</i> God	Proclamation	Speaking For God
Ch. 4 - Running <i>Ahead</i> of God	Correction	Learning Of God

THE COMPASSION OF GOD

- | | | |
|------|---------|--|
| I. | Ch. 1 - | Jonah and the Ship - <i>Protesting</i> |
| II. | Ch. 2 - | Jonah and the Fish - <i>Praying</i> |
| III. | Ch. 3 - | Jonah and the City - <i>Preaching</i> |
| IV. | Ch. 4 - | Jonah and the Lord - <i>Pouting</i> |

- B. Why Did Jonah Flee? Poor Jonah is surely the most misunderstood personality in the Bible. The common idea is that Jonah out of cowardly *fear* refused to preach in the Assyrian capital city and thus fled from his commission. Yet, such a view of the man is most unfortunate and is totally inconsistent with what one finds in the book. For example, on board ship he shows utter fearlessness of death, himself urging the sailors to throw him overboard! Such an one is no coward. What, then, is the *real* reason Jonah fled, rather than deliver his message to Nineveh?
1. The answer is found in Jonah's own words in 4:1-2. *Jonah fled because he did not want Jehovah to spare Nineveh!* Jonah was ready to forfeit his prophetic office, prepared to flee to Spain in exile, prepared even to die if necessary, rather than see Nineveh spared!
 - a. Jonah was given a mission and a message and obviously cared little for either.
 2. And what was the cause motivating the prophet's thinking? There were two awesome facts about Assyria which gave Jonah a vehement dread that judgement on Nineveh might be averted.
 - a. *First*, Assyria was the rising world-power destined to destroy Israel; and Jonah knew this.
 - b. *Second*, the notorious brutality of the Assyrians was such as to make all neighboring peoples shudder. There were well known for their hideous cruelty to conquered peoples. They were the German Nazis of their day. They had a unquenching thirst and lust for blood and vengeance. Pyramids of human heads lined the streets in honor of the conquering Assyrian monarch. Men were impaled, flayed alive, blinded, deprived of their hands, feet, eyes, ears, and noses, etc.
 - 1) Every man in Israel knew these things. Jonah most certainly did for he came from the border-town of Gath-hepher, and may have witnessed some Assyrian savageries. Hear another prophet speak of the Israeli attitude toward their northern neighbor in Nahum 3:1-3,19. There is no pity in Nahum's voice. He felt exactly as did Jonah!
 3. Besides knowing of the Assyrian savagery, the prophet knew that Assyria was the nation predicted to destroy his beloved homeland and people. Twenty years prior Isaiah had prophesied as much (see Isaiah 7:17 and Hosea 9:3; 10:6; 11:5). Yes, Jonah knew the bitter role Assyria was to play; thus, when the almost "*to good to be true*" divine announcement came to him, that Nineveh was to be destroyed in forty days, his heart must have felt a sudden sense of relief.
 - a. Never had he received any happier news - for we must not overlook the fact that besides being a prophet he was a patriot, a patriot who loved his native land and native people.
 4. There was one thought in Jonah's mind: if Nineveh perished - Israel was saved! However, there was one thing Jonah feared - Jehovah was a merciful God; and if Nineveh repented she would be spared and Israel lost. If only he could be sure that Nineveh might not be spared. If only she never received Jehovah's warning. If only...
- C. Jonah's Choice. Jonah now must make the costliest choice of his life. He must choose between suffering the divine vengeance upon himself for disobeying orders, and thus save Israel; or else he must go to Nineveh, and possibly cause the salvation of the city, which would result in Israel's ruin.
1. He had made a decision. He would rather flee than risk delivering the message. He would sacrifice himself so that Israel might be saved.
 - a. His action is regrettable. His motive is touchingly heroic.
 2. One more thought... *Jonah probably was not the last preacher to find a ship for Tarshish rather than face Nineveh!*

III. THE ACCOUNT

- A. Jonah and the Storm - *Protesting!* Now for the text itself. Read verses 1-7.
"When one sets out to baffle God, there is bound to be a storm!" Jonah knew that the storm came *because* of him. Three times it is stated that Jonah was *"fleeing from the presence of the Lord"* (vs.3,10). These words are not meant to imply that Jonah was under the delusion that he could sail to a place where God was not (see vs.8-9). Jonah knew the writings of his nation and was especially a student of the Psalms as evidenced from his prayer in chapter two. No doubt he knew of David's 139th Psalm and the omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence of Israel's God. No, Jonah certainly was not imagining the possibility of out-sailing God!
1. What was it then? Jonah's going out *"from the presence of the Lord"* was his renunciation of his prophetic standing before Jehovah. When Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish, he was, in essence, turning in his resignation and prophetic mantle.
 - a. *"Get up, call upon your God..."* echoes the frightened captain. However, at this moment Jonah had no God to call upon. He was the only atheist on board.
 - b. In verse 8 the sailors shot a series of questions to the prophet in rapid-fire succession. They sought a confession from this stranger.
 2. See verses 10-12. Here we see that Jonah was no coward. Had he been such he would have begged the sailors to let him remain on board till the ship went to pieces. But he was too manly to permit others to perish on his account, and too honest to try and escape the fate he deserved.
 3. And verses 13-16. For the first time in their lives these paganistic seamen prayed to Jehovah and made vows of service to Him. Thus far, the flight of Jonah had resulted in some good - the conversion of the seamen.
 - a. And don't you know these sailors had a story to tell upon arriving at port. They certainly would not have proceeded with their intended voyage for all their cargo was lost and boat damaged. In all probability they returned to Joppa. One wonders if they had seen the fish appear and swallow Jonah. And we can't help but wonder how far the story circulated - perhaps as far as Nineveh, before even Jonah himself arrived there!
- B. Jonah and the Fish - *Praying.* Chapter 2 should really begin with 1:17. The swallowing of Jonah by the fish was not an act of divine punishment but one of divine preservation. From the belly of the fish Jonah prayed? What would you have done?
1. See verse 5. Seaweeds were entangled about his head and face to the extent that it was impossible to move. Added to this discomfort, there would be about him the remains of whatever the great fish had last eaten. The stench of smell, the slime of feel, the gasping for air...all would lend a feeling that death would arrive at any moment.
 2. Read verses 6-9. Someone well said that there are times when we must go into the lowest depths that we may regain a living faith.
 - a. It was there, in the bowels of that fish, that Jonah came to understand with vividness the folly and futility of disobeying God. Jonah asked for another chance. He got it (vs.10).
 3. Jonah learned, and through his experience millions have learned, that when God enjoins a disagreeable duty, it is far easier to go and do it than to run away from it.
 - a. Thus, from his Gethsemane experience he would now be better able to say, *"Thy will be done..."* Jonah was born again. He got another chance.
- C. Jonah and the City - *Preaching.* And now with what pleasure the revengeful prophet announces his warning to the city. Three times God refers to Nineveh as *"that great city."* It was the Assyrian capital city having a population of nearly one million and was some 80 miles in circumference. The walls of the city were 100 feet high, flanked by 1,500 towers, each 200 feet high. Four chariots could drive abreast upon the walls. Located on the banks of the Tigris it was one of the greatest and most ancient cities (see Genesis 10:11) of antiquity. It would take Jonah three days to

preach in each district of the city (vs.3). Yet, he preached and the people repented (vs.4-10).

1. Are we to believe that the whole population of this vast metropolis repented at the preaching of this lone prophet from despised Israel? Yes! The reason why Jonah's appearance and preaching in Nineveh caused quite a stir is given in our Lord's words of Luke 11:29-30.
 - a. Jonah was a "*sign*" to the Ninevites. Yet, how could he have been a sign to them if they *did not know* of Jonah's experiences?
2. Here we must do a little reading between the lines. Remember those sailors? What a tale they had had to tell. And their damaged boat and missing cargo was at least partial proof of the mysterious God-sent storm. Along the Mediterranean seacoast much Assyrian commerce was done. No doubt the Jonah story was told far and wide.
 - a. But what of the feelings of all, when the supposedly drowned Jonah appeared himself and recounted his experience and then announced his intention of now going to Nineveh. How could it be otherwise than that this phenomenal story should reach Nineveh before ever Jonah got there!
3. Not only that, but Jonah's experience, in the fish would no doubt have left a bleached appearance about him - thus, his visual appearance in a very superstitious city would have indeed been a solemn "*sign*" to the astonished Ninevites.
 - a. There is no real reason why we should not believe that Nineveh's repentance took place just as the book of Jonah describes, and just as Jesus declared - Matt. 12:41.

D. Jonah and the Lord - Pouting. It isn't until chapter four that we see the real message of the book. Here we see a glimpse of a dialogue between Jonah and the Lord.

1. Note verse 1-3. Jonah is not only "*displeased*" and "*angry*" but his dismay at Israel's dismal future, now that Nineveh is to be spared, so overcomes him that he prays for death. He is tenderly reproved by the Lord in verse 4 and with perhaps a faint gleam of hope for Nineveh's demise he goes out east of the city to "*see what would happen*" (vs.5). Here Jehovah patiently and tenderly reasoned with His servant using three things - a plant, a worm, a wind.
 - a. Verse 6. Here is a miracle-plant produced to provide shade and comfort for the discouraged prophet.
 - b. Verse 7. Next, a God-appointed worm causes the plant to wither, thus, leaving Jonah exposed to the sun again.
 - c. Verse 8. Finally, a "*scorching east wind*" was produced which caused Jonah to faint. This was not the nice refreshing tropical breeze but a dust-laden *sirocco*, or hot wind, which often strikes that part of the world. It is a hot-almost suffocating kind of wind from which all hasten to take shelter.
2. Poor Jonah, discouraged at the thought of Israel's dark future now that Nineveh is spared, facing the glare of a merciless desert sun made worse by the sultry *sirocco* - yearns only for one thing: death.
 - a. He was angry because Nineveh was NOT destroyed. Now he is angry because the plant WAS destroyed! However, he is aroused by the voice of God in verse 9-11.
3. God makes His point to His servant and the book comes to a close.

IV. JONAH AS A TYPE

- A. Jonah *typically* anticipates the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Why was Jonah retained in the fish for "*three days and three nights*?" If the fish had served Jehovah's purpose of preventing drowning, might not the prophet have been discharged without further delay? Jesus has given us the "*why*" in Matt. 12:40.
 1. And...as Jonah came forth from the grave (in a figure) with a renewed spirit to preach, so did Christ arise from the tomb with a message to be distributed to the whole world - "*to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*"

Conclusion

The book of Jonah was never written merely to tell us the story of Jonah as an end in itself. Rather, we are told about this man and this city because of what it reveals to us of God. Jonah needed to learn that God's special favor toward Israel did not mean a lesser love for other peoples. The election of the one nation did not mean the rejection of all others. Israel had been chosen - yes, but not for her sake alone, but to the end that she might become a blessing to *all* peoples.

2. ② You observe the attitude of Jonah and you see reflected there the spirit of the elder brother who was angry that his younger brother had returned to enjoy his father's favor and forgiveness.
 - ③ You look at the attitude of Jonah and see that spirit demonstrated by the Pharisees who brought the woman taken in adultery to Jesus to be condemned.
 - ④ Or their spirit when they condemned our Lord for His association with the loathsome publicans and sinners.
 - ⑤ Or the disposition of the self-righteous Pharisee who prayed, "*God, I thank thee that I am not like other men...*"

Look at these and you see Jonah!

3. Jonah needed to learn the lesson of the "*Nineveh assignment*." God loves all human creatures and doesn't wish for any to perish. That included Nineveh. That included Israel. That includes America. That includes the Soviet Union. That includes Mexico. That includes Japan. That includes the Philippine Islands... Brethren, let's not let our patriotism over-rule our obligation to deliver the salvation message to all peoples of all nations regardless of the color or their skin or the language of their tongue.
 - a. Read again 4:11 and remember the little song you learned years ago. It's still true!

*Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world -
Red and Yellow, Black and White,
They are precious in His sight,
Jesus loves the little children
...of the world!*

- b. God cares for the souls of every person. Do you?

- b. Malachi prophecies that when the Messiah comes He will purify and refine His people in order that they be made righteous.

D. The Eternal Principle of Giving, 3:10. Here is the:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| 1. <i>Call</i> of God | → | <i>"Bring the whole tithe..."</i> |
| 2. <i>Challenge</i> of God | → | <i>"Test me..."</i> |
| 3. <i>Promise</i> of God | → | <i>"I will open the windows of heaven..."</i> |
| 4. <i>Result,</i> | → | <i>"All nations will call you blessed..."</i> |

- a. The eternal principle of giving? Man gives and God windows! See Psa. 37:25.
Is this just an Old Testament principle? See Matt. 6:33.

E. A Study on the Law, 4:4-5

1. The law defined? *"statutes and ordinances"*
2. The law began? *"in Horeb" (Sinai)*
3. The law was for? *"all Israel"*
4. The law would end? vs.5 - John the Baptist in preparing the way for the Messiah also prepared the way for the end of the law of Moses. See John 1:17.

Conclusion

1. Thus, the Old Testament leaves us with a final promise of the coming of the Messiah. The very first promise and the very last, in the Old Testament, concerns HIM. And, yet, what a wealth of material lies in between. From Genesis to Malachi the Old Testament story is a story of a coming Savior - Jesus Christ our Lord.
2. And, so, the prophecy of Malachi brings down the curtain on the Old Testament with a final reminder that sin must be dealt with. When the New Testament opens the scene will be set for the One who alone can cure man's sin.
3. One final thought - God takes care of His own. Read 3:16-18. Are YOU serving God?

INTRODUCTION:

1. Read the book of Jonah.
2. The book of Jonah is unlike the other minor prophets in that there is no prophetic "burden." It is chiefly an account of the life of the prophet Jonah.
3. Jack Lewis in his book "The Minor Prophets" lists several things about Jonah that were not true of the other minor prophets:
 - a. "Jonah is the only minor prophet in whose career the miraculous plays a prominent role."
 - b. He is the "only one whose major activity is on foreign soil."
 - c. He is the "only one who preaches exclusively to a foreign people."
 - d. "Jonah is the only Old Testament character represented as taking a trip on the Mediterranean."
 - e. "Jonah is also the only minor prophet mentioned by Jesus and is the only Old Testament character likened by the Lord to himself. (Matt. 12:38-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32)."
4. In this study let's consider:

DISCUSSION:

I. GOD GAVE A COMMISSION TO JONAH. Jonah 1:2; 3:2.

- A. Jonah preached during the days of Jereboam II. (2 Kgs. 14:25).
- B. He was told to go to Nineveh, a city approximately 500 miles east of Palestine, but he sought to flee to Tarshish, a city about 2,000 miles west of Palestine.
- C. Jonah's main reason for not wanting to go to Nineveh is most surprising. "He makes it quite plain that it was not preaching to Nineveh that he minded, nor the dangers and hardships of the journey, but it was the possibility that the people might repent and be spared that he resented. He was afraid of God's mercy, and fear drove him to Tarshish. If he did not preach to Nineveh, then the people would not repent, and God would have no alternative but to destroy Nineveh."
(Jack Lewis)
 1. "And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." (Jonah 4:2,3).
 2. Jonah was in "the peculiar position of being a preacher who hoped he would not succeed."
- D. Jonah carried out his commission when God spoke to him the second time. Jonah 3:2.
 1. He went to Nineveh and cried "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Jonah 3:4.
 2. The people of Nineveh believed Jonah and turned from their evil deeds and God changed his mind about the destruction of the city. Jonah 3:5-10.

II. SOME INTERESTING LESSONS AND HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BOOK OF JONAH.

A. There are several miracles mentioned in the book.

1. "But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken...So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging." (1:4,15).
2. "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." (1:17).
 - a. Jesus accepted the account of the fish swallowed Jonah and him living.
 - b. Jonah was in the fish's belly "three days and three nights." 1:17
3. "And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd." (4:6).
 - a. The gourd was to provide comfort for Jonah.
 - b. He was exceeding glad.

4. "But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered." (4:7).
5. "And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said It is better for me to die than to live." (4:8):
- B. God's attitude toward Nineveh shows God's great love for the world. Cf. Jn. 3:16.
 1. Jonah thought of God only as God of the Jews and was unwilling to share him with others.
 2. Too many today limit God to certain race or nation.
- C. Jonah's attitude toward Nineveh shows the typical attitude of too many people about lost men and women.

THE MINOR PROPHETS - JONAH
QUESTIONS ON LESSON SIX

TRUE OR FALSE

1. _____ Jonah is mentioned nowhere else in the Bible except in this book.
2. _____ The city of Nineveh and the city of Tarshish were approximately 2500 miles apart.
3. _____ Jonah was asleep while the storm was raging.
4. _____ The sailors asked Jonah five questions.
5. _____ The sailors didn't try to save the ship.
6. _____ There was nothing unusual about the fish that swallowed Jonah.
7. _____ While in the fish's belly Jonah stated that he would look again toward the temple.
8. _____ God didn't need to speak to Jonah the second time.
9. _____ Jonah's sermon consisted of 8 words.
10. _____ Jonah's preaching got great results.
11. _____ God changed his mind about the destruction of Nineveh.
12. _____ Jonah was happy that Nineveh was saved.
13. _____ Jonah was more concerned over the death of the gourd than the people in Nineveh.
14. _____ There were at least 20,000 people in Nineveh.

THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Jonah prophesied during the days of what king? (2 Kgs. 14:25) _____
2. Why did God command Jonah to preach at Nineveh? _____
3. Read carefully Jonah 1:3 and Jonah 4:1-3 and decide the real reason Jonah tried to flee to Tarshish. Think! _____

4. Name at least five different miracles that are named in this book.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

5. How did the sailors know that Jonah was fleeing from the Lord's presence? _____
 _____ How did they decide who was responsible
 for the great storm? _____

6. How long was Jonah in the fish's belly? _____
 How did the Lord use this incident in the New Testament? (Matt. 12:39,40) _____

Did the Lord accept the account of Jonah^{as} a real historical event? _____

7. How many times is Nineveh referred to as "a great city" in this book? _____
 How far had Jonah gone into the city when he began to preach? _____

8. What three things did the people of Nineveh do when they heard God's message?
 a. _____ b. _____
 c. _____

9. In Jonah 3:10, we read "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way...
 Matt. 12:41 says they did what at Jonah's preaching? _____

10. How would the people of Jonah's generation condemn the people of Christ's generation?
 (Matt. 12:41) _____

11. What did God go when he saw Nineveh's repentance? _____
 _____ Does this show that prophecy was conditional? (Read
 Jeremiah 18:7-10). _____

12. Why was Jonah so displeased? _____

_____ Did Jonah really want the city to repent? _____

13. Why did Jonah go out of the city and sit down? _____

14. Why did God prepare a gourd for Jonah? _____

What happened to the gourd? _____

What was Jonah's reaction? _____

15. How did God use the gourd incident to teach Jonah a lesson about his change of mind toward Nineveh? _____

The Book of JONAH

Introduction

The little book of Jonah tells the story of what occurs when God says, "Go!" and man says "No!" It is an account of a patriot-prophet who resigns his position and goes A.W.O.L. without Divine permission. And, interestingly enough, it illustrates how it is possible for everyone to obey God except the one person you would expect - the preacher!

1. However, the book involves so much more. Generally, we focus so much attention on the "fish" that we fail to distinguish the real significance of the book. Forget the fish. We have looked so long at the great fish that we have failed to see the great God!
 - a. At the heart of these four chapters is not the man or the fish or even the city itself. Those ingredients are there, yes, but only because they relate to the central theme of the prophecy - the compassion of Jehovah for all peoples!
2. Here we see the Old Testament parable of the Prodigal Son. Here we see God is not so much a respecter of persons as He is a respecter of character. Here we see how God is slow to punish and quick to pardon when there is penitence. Here we see God's care for all His creation. And here, as in no other book, is observed the divine longsuffering - longsuffering with an entire nation; longsuffering with one man.
 - a. The central message of Jonah is nowhere better summarized than by the words of Peter in his second letter 3:9:

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

- b. An Old Testament prophet needed to learn that lesson. Nearly 3,000 years later we need to do the same.

NDY

1. FACT or FICTION?

- A. The book of Jonah - is it real history or mythical allegory? Was Jonah a real person? Was he really swallowed by a great fish as the book declares? Did he really convert a whole city thus diverting Divine judgement? Or... is the book merely fictional? Suffice it to say that the book of Jonah, more than any other book of scripture, has been the butt of the scoffer and a prime target for the critic. Consider these positive evidences for the historicity of Jonah and his book:
 1. Is Jonah historical? He certainly is! Read 1:1. Do we read anywhere else of such a person? We certainly do! See 2 Kings 14:25. Now king Jeroboam II was a real enough person. He was, in fact, the greatest and longest reigning monarch of the northern nation. And all of his advances and military accomplishments took place exactly as predicted by his prophetic advisor - Jonah, the son of Amittai.
 - a. As a result Jonah was probably known to the Assyrians as a political advisor to king Jeroboam.
 - b. The 2 Kings passage also fixes a time to the ministry of Jonah - 790-750 B.C. (the reign of Jeroboam II), thus, making him a contemporary with Hosea and Amos.
 2. Is the narrative historical? There is nothing in the text to suggest otherwise. This is no mythical - "Once upon a time in a faraway land..." Rather, the book describes real people, places, and events in the historical context. It is a narrative of true happenings; a small bit of real history.
 - a. Furthermore, it is unreasonable to believe that a Jew would ever invent a story representing God showing mercy towards the Gentiles.
 3. Is the fish historical? Could it happen? The obvious answer for all who believe in God, is that of course it could! - for if God created all the fish in the seas, He could very easily create one specifically for the purpose of swallowing and preserving Jonah. Has it ever happened before? Yes!
 - a. Consider the account related by the scientific editor of the *Journal des Debats* of Paris:

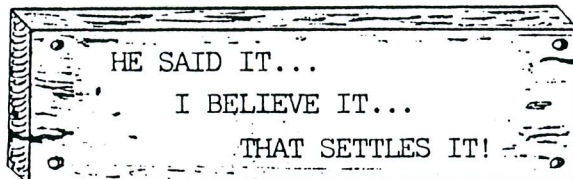
"In February 1891, the whale-ship *Star of the East* was in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands, and the look-out sighted a large sperm whale three miles away. Two boats were lowered, and in a short time one of the harpooners was enabled to spear the fish. The second boat attacked the whale, but was upset by a lash of its tail, and the men thrown into the sea, one being drowned, and another, James Bartley, having disappeared, could not be found. The whale was killed, and in a few hours the great body was lying by the ship's side, and the crew busy with the axes and spades removing the blubber. They worked all day and part of the night. Next day they attached some tackle to the stomach, which was hoisted on deck. The sailors were startled by spasmodic signs of life, and inside was found the missing sailor, doubled up and unconscious. He was laid on the deck and treated to a bath of sea-water which soon revived him; but his mind was not clear, and he was placed in the captain's quarters, where he remained two weeks a raving lunatic. He was kindly and carefully treated by the captain, and by the officers of the ship, and gradually gained possession of his senses. At the end of the third week he had entirely recovered from the shock, and resumed his duties.

"During his sojourn in the whale's stomach Bartley's skin, where exposed to the action of the gastric juice, underwent a striking change. His face, neck, and hands were bleached to a deadly whiteness, and took on the appearance of parchment. Bartley affirms that he would probably have lived inside his house of flesh until he starved, for he lost his senses through fright and not from lack of air."

- b. For those still skeptical, I would advise a trip to Washington, D.C. and the Smithsonian Institute's Museum of Natural History where off to the left of the main entrance lobby is displayed a 30,000 pound sperm whale captured off the Florida Keys in 1912. It is 45 feet in length having a mouth 38 inches wide and at the time of its capture held a 1,500 pound black fish in it's stomach.
- c. To argue - "*Could it happen?*" in reference to Jonah's experience is on par with the mentality of arguing the possibility of the four minute mile. IT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE! To argue otherwise is to go against all fact and reason.

B. Jesus and Jonah.

- 1. Perhaps the greatest evidence for the historicity of the Jonah account is that Christ conclusively confirms it! See Matt. 12:38-41 and Luke 11:30-32.
 - a. As to whether it *could* happen we have seen that it could. As to whether it *did* happen we have the confirmatory word of the infallible Christ Himself. Like the popular bumper sticker:



One more thing...

The ability or inability to accept a miracle depends on whether or not one spells his God with a capital "G."

How do you think Jonah spelled it?

II. THE OUTLINE

- A. The little story is in four parts which correspond to the four chapters. It can be easily divided in several ways -

Ch. 1 - Running <i>From</i> God	Disobedience	<i>Fleeing From</i> God
Ch. 2 - Running <i>To</i> God	Preservation	<i>Praying To</i> God
Ch. 3 - Running <i>With</i> God	Proclamation	<i>Speaking For</i> God
Ch. 4 - Running <i>Ahead</i> of God	Correction	<i>Learning Of</i> God

THE COMPASSION OF GOD

- | | | | |
|------|---------|----------------------|-------------------|
| I. | Ch. 1 - | Jonah and the Ship - | <i>Protesting</i> |
| II. | Ch. 2 - | Jonah and the Fish - | <i>Praying</i> |
| III. | Ch. 3 - | Jonah and the City - | <i>Preaching</i> |
| IV. | Ch. 4 - | Jonah and the Lord - | <i>Pouting</i> |

- B. Why Did Jonah Flee? Poor Jonah is surely the most misunderstood personality in the Bible. The common idea is that Jonah out of cowardly *fear* refused to preach in the Assyrian capital city and thus fled from his commission. Yet, such a view of the man is most unfortunate and is totally inconsistent with what one finds in the book. For example, on board ship he shows utter fearlessness of death, himself urging the sailors to throw him overboard! Such an one is no coward. What, then, is the *real* reason Jonah fled, rather than deliver his message to Nineveh?
1. The answer is found in Jonah's own words in 4:1-2. Jonah fled because he did not want Jehovah to spare Nineveh! Jonah was ready to forfeit his prophetic office, prepared to flee to Spain in exile, prepared even to die if necessary, rather than see Nineveh spared!
 - a. Jonah was given a mission and a message and obviously cared little for either.
 2. And what was the cause motivating the prophet's thinking? There were two awesome facts about Assyria which gave Jonah a vehement dread that judgement on Nineveh might be averted.
 - a. First, Assyria was the rising world-power destined to destroy Israel; and Jonah knew this.
 - b. Second, the notorious brutality of the Assyrians was such as to make all neighboring peoples shudder. There were well known for their hideous cruelty to conquered peoples. They were the German Nazis of their day. They had a unquenching thirst and lust for blood and vengeance. Pyramids of human heads lined the streets in honor of the conquering Assyrian monarch. Men were impaled, flayed alive, blinded, deprived of their hands, feet, eyes, ears, and noses, etc.
 - 1) Every man in Israel knew these things. Jonah most certainly did for he came from the border-town of Gath-hepher, and may have witnessed some Assyrian savageries. Hear another prophet speak of the Israeli attitude toward their northern neighbor in Nahum 3:1-3,19. There is no pity in Nahum's voice. He felt exactly as did Jonah!
 3. Besides knowing of the Assyrian savagery, the prophet knew that Assyria was the nation predicted to destroy his beloved homeland and people. Twenty years prior Isaiah had prophesied as much (see Isaiah 7:17 and Hosea 9:3; 10:6; 11:5). Yes, Jonah knew the bitter role Assyria was to play; thus, when the almost "*to good to be true*" divine announcement came to him, that Nineveh was to be destroyed in forty days, his heart must have felt a sudden sense of relief.
 - a. Never had he received any happier news - for we must not overlook the fact that besides being a prophet he was a patriot, a patriot who loved his native land and native people.
 4. There was one thought in Jonah's mind: if Nineveh perished - Israel was saved! However, there was one thing Jonah feared - Jehovah was a merciful God; and if Nineveh repented she would be spared and Israel lost. If only he could be sure that Nineveh might not be spared. If only she never received Jehovah's warning. If only...
- C. Jonah's Choice. Jonah now must make the costliest choice of his life. He must choose between suffering the divine vengeance upon himself for disobeying orders, and thus save Israel; or else he must go to Nineveh, and possibly cause the salvation of the city, which would result in Israel's ruin.
1. He had made a decision. He would rather flee than risk delivering the message. He would sacrifice himself so that Israel might be saved.
 - a. His action is regrettable. His motive is touchingly heroic.
 2. One more thought... Jonah probably was not the last preacher to find a ship for Tarshish rather than face Nineveh!

III. THE ACCOUNT

- A. Jonah and the Storm - *Protesting!* Now for the text itself. Read verses 1-7.

"When one sets out to baffle God, there is bound to be a storm!" Jonah knew that the storm came *because* of him. Three times it is stated that Jonah was "fleeing from the presence of the Lord" (vs.3,10). These words are not meant to imply that Jonah was under the delusion that he could sail to a place where God was not (see vs.8-9). Jonah knew the writings of his nation and was especially a student of the Psalms as evidenced from his prayer in chapter two. No doubt he knew of David's 139th Psalm and the omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence of Israel's God. No, Jonah certainly was not imagining the possibility of out-sailing God!

1. What was it then? Jonah's going out "from the presence of the Lord" was his renunciation of his prophetic standing before Jehovah. When Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish, he was, in essence, turning in his resignation and prophetic mantle.
 - a. "Get up, call upon your God..." echoes the frightened captain. However, at this moment Jonah had no God to call upon. He was the only atheist on board.
 - b. In verse 8 the sailors shot a series of questions to the prophet in rapid-fire succession. They sought a confession from this stranger.
2. See verses 10-12. Here we see that Jonah was no coward. Had he been such he would have begged the sailors to let him remain on board till the ship went to pieces. But he was too manly to permit others to perish on his account, and to honest to try and escape the fate he deserved.
3. And verses 13-16. For the first time in their lives these paganistic seamen prayed to Jehovah and made vows of service to Him. Thus far, the flight of Jonah had resulted in some good - the conversion of the seamen.
 - a. And don't you know these sailors had a story to tell upon arriving at port. They certainly would not have proceeded with their intended voyage for all their cargo was lost and boat damaged. In all probability they returned to Joppa. One wonders if they had seen the fish appear and swallow Jonah. And we can't help but wonder how far the story circulated - perhaps as far as Nineveh, before even Jonah himself arrived there!

- B. Jonah and the Fish - *Praying.* Chapter 2 should really begin with 1:17. The swallowing of Jonah by the fish was not an act of divine punishment but one of divine preservation. From the belly of the fish Jonah prayed? What would you have done?

1. See verse 5. Seaweeds were entangled about his head and face to the extent that it was impossible to move. Added to this discomfort, there would be about him the remains of whatever the great fish had last eaten. The stench of smell, the slime of feel, the gasping for air...all would lend a feeling that death would arrive at any moment.
2. Read verses 6-9. Someone well said that there are times when we must go into the lowest depths that we may regain a living faith.
 - a. It was there, in the bowels of that fish, that Jonah came to understand with vividness the folly and futility of disobeying God. Jonah asked for another chance. He got it (vs.10).
3. Jonah learned, and through his experience millions have learned, that when God enjoins a disagreeable duty, it is far easier to go and do it than to run away from it.
 - a. Thus, from his Gethsemane experience he would now be better able to say, "Thy will be done..." Jonah was born again. He got another chance.

- C. Jonah and the City - *Preaching.* And now with what pleasure the revengeful prophet announces his warning to the city. Three times God refers to Nineveh as "that great city." It was the Assyrian capital city having a population of nearly one million and was some 80 miles in circumference. The walls of the city were 100 feet high, flanked by 1,500 towers, each 200 feet high. Four chariots could drive abreast upon the walls. Located on the banks of the Tigris it was one of the greatest and most ancient cities (see Genesis 10:11) of antiquity. It would take Jonah three days to

preach in each district of the city (vs.3). Yet, he preached and the people repented (vs.4-10).

1. Are we to believe that the whole population of this vast metropolis repented at the preaching of this lone prophet from despised Israel? Yes! The reason why Jonah's appearance and preaching in Nineveh caused quite a stir is given in our Lord's words of Luke 11:29-30.
 - a. Jonah was a "sign" to the Ninevites. Yet, how could he have been a sign to them if they did not know of Jonah's experiences?
2. Here we must do a little reading between the lines. Remember those sailors? What a tale they had had to tell. And their damaged boat and missing cargo was at least partial proof of the mysterious God-sent storm. Along the Mediterranean seacoast much Assyrian commerce was done. No doubt the Jonah story was told far and wide.
 - a. But what of the feelings of all, when the supposedly drowned Jonah appeared himself and recounted his experience and then announced his intention of now going to Nineveh. How could it be otherwise than that this phenomenal story should reach Nineveh before ever Jonah got there!
3. Not only that, but Jonah's experience in the fish would no doubt have left a bleached appearance about him - thus, his visual appearance in a very superstitious city would have indeed been a solemn "sign" to the astonished Ninevites.
 - a. There is no real reason why we should not believe that Nineveh's repentance took place just as the book of Jonah describes, and just as Jesus declared - Matt. 12:41.

D. Jonah and the Lord - Pouting. It isn't until chapter four that we see the real message of the book. Here we see a glimpse of a dialogue between Jonah and the Lord.

1. Note verse 1-3. Jonah is not only "displeased" and "angry" but his dismay at Israel's dismal future, now that Nineveh is to be spared, so overcomes him that he prays for death. He is tenderly reproved by the Lord in verse 4 and with perhaps a faint gleam of hope for Nineveh's demise he goes out east of the city to "see what would happen" (vs.5). Here Jehovah patiently and tenderly reasoned with His servant using three things - a plant, a worm, a wind.
 - a. Verse 6. Here is a miracle-plant produced to provide shade and comfort for the discouraged prophet.
 - b. Verse 7. Next, a God-appointed worm causes the plant to wither, thus, leaving Jonah exposed to the sun again.
 - c. Verse 8. Finally, a "scorching east wind" was produced which caused Jonah to faint. This was not the nice refreshing tropical breeze but a dust-laden *sirocco*, or hot wind, which often strikes that part of the world. It is a hot-almost suffocating kind of wind from which all hasten to take shelter.
2. Poor Jonah, discouraged at the thought of Israel's dark future now that Nineveh is spared, facing the glare of a merciless desert sun made worse by the sultry *sirocco* - yearns only for one thing: death.
 - a. He was angry because Nineveh was NOT destroyed. Now he is angry because the plant WAS destroyed! However, he is aroused by the voice of God in verse 9-11.
3. God makes His point to His servant and the book comes to a close.

IV. JONAH AS A TYPE

- A. Jonah typically anticipates the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Why was Jonah retained in the fish for "three days and three nights?" If the fish had served Jehovah's purpose of preventing drowning, might not the prophet have been discharged without further delay? Jesus has given us the "why" in Matt. 12:40.
 1. And...as Jonah came forth from the grave (in a figure) with a renewed spirit to preach, so did Christ arise from the tomb with a message to be distributed to the whole world - "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Conclusion

- The book of Jonah was never written merely to tell us the story of Jonah as an end in itself. Rather, we are told about this man and this city because of what it reveals to us of God. Jonah needed to learn that God's special favor toward Israel did not mean a lesser love for other peoples. The election of the one nation did not mean the rejection of all others. Israel had been chosen - yes, but not for her sake alone, but to the end that she might become a blessing to all peoples.
2. ② You observe the attitude of Jonah and you see reflected there the spirit of the elder brother who was angry that his younger brother had returned to enjoy his father's favor and forgiveness. *Luke 15: 25-32*
- ③ You look at the attitude of Jonah and see that spirit demonstrated by the Pharisees who brought the woman taken in adultery to Jesus to be condemned.
- ④ Or their spirit when they condemned our Lord for His association with the loathsome publicans and sinners.
- ⑤ Or the disposition of the self-righteous Pharisee who prayed, "God, I thank thee that I am not like other men..."

Look at these and you see Jonah!

3. Jonah needed to learn the lesson of the "Nineveh assignment." God loves all human creatures and doesn't wish for any to perish. That included Nineveh. That included Israel. That includes America. That includes the Soviet Union. That includes Mexico. That includes Japan. That includes the Philippine Islands... Brethren, let's not let our patriotism over-rule our obligation to deliver the salvation message to all peoples of all nations regardless of the color or their skin or the language of their tongue.
- a. Read again 4:11 and remember the little song you learned years ago. It's still true!

*Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world -
Red and Yellow, Black and White,
They are precious in His sight,
Jesus loves the little children
...of the world!*

- b. God cares for the souls of every person. Do you?

MICAH:

“The best of them is as a brier” (Micah 7: 4) - Lessons from Corrupt Leaders

William Howard

Micah 7:4 The best of them *is* like a brier; The most upright *is sharper* than a thorn hedge; The day of your watchman and your punishment comes; Now shall be their perplexity.

INTRODUCTION

- A. What can be learned from corrupt leaders?
- B. There is always a value in bad examples
- C. The Bible teaches using bad examples as well as good
- D. The Bible records the lives of both David and Jeroboam (good king, evil king)
- E. It records the actions of both Paul and Demas (one persevered, one did not)
- F. 3 John 1:11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.

BODY

I. Concerning Leaders

A. In every human endeavor leadership is needed.

- 1. Humanity needs leaders.
- 2. Groups of people need leaders.
- 3. Leadership is essential to righteousness
- 4. Leadership is essential to the church
 - a. God is so interested in His church and in the leaders in His church He set qualifications concerning them. It sets the bounds for the eldership: 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1
 - b. A congregation with qualified men can be properly led.

B. Good leaders shelter righteousness

- 1. They protect the innocent and punish the guilty
- 2. They secure and uphold good works.
- 3. They defend the truth
- 4. They do not subvert justice
- 5. All congregations will go through troubled times
 - a. With good leaders a congregation can sail past with the least amount of harm
 - b. With good leaders problems will be addressed and resolved

C. Weak leaders always serve evil (silently accommodating evil)

- 1. Wickedness is advanced by weak leaders who do nothing or make ineffectual actions
- 2. They are indecisive, and directionless
- 3. The decisions made tend to be the results of cowardice
- 4. They are unpredictable except that they will succumb to pressures
- 5. They weigh out matters that are of no real concern (matters that have no weight)
- 6. They will occupy themselves over non-issues

7. They bring good works into disarray and generally try to avoid problems.
8. All congregations will go through troubled times
 - a. With weak leaders a congregation will take greater harm
 - b. Weak leaders look for easy sailing, ignoring problems when they arrive
 - i. It is easy to be a leader in easy times, anybody can lead in easy times
 - ii. Congregations need leaders who are vigilant and diligent – weak leaders will be neither.
 - c. Weak leaders will demand that the faithful not rock the boat while the boat is being overturned by the wicked.
 - d. In their definition upholding the truth is rocking the boat
 - i. Due diligence is rocking the boat
 - ii. Upsetting the wicked destroying the congregation is rocking the boat
 - iii. A call to do what a good leader does is rocking the boat

D. Corrupt leaders produce wickedness every time.

1. In Matthew 7:18 Jesus states, “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit.”
2. Wise leaders cannot be found from among the foolish.
3. Honest leaders cannot be found from among the corrupt.
4. Corrupt men cannot be trusted to be honest on a whim. They will choose wickedness.
5. A corrupt man cannot be trusted to do right simply because he is given a place of authority and responsibility
6. Here is no friend of righteousness
7. Righteousness is not protected or upheld
8. Most of the leaders of Micah’s day were corrupt.

II. The Leaders of Micah’s Day

A. Micah lived around 737 BC

B. Micah is contemporary with Isaiah and Hosea

1. Not all men are corrupt
2. Some prophets are faithful

C. The Kings

Micah 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

1. Jotham – a weak king

2 Kings 15:34-35

34 And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD; he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done.

35 However the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. He built the Upper Gate of the house of the LORD.

- a. He is a weak king who does some good, but leaves so much that he could have stopped.
- b. His lack of complete diligence, his weakness will affect his son Ahaz.

2. Ahaz – a wicked king,

2 Kings 16:3-4

3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel; indeed he made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel.

4 And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

3. Hezekiah – a good king

2 Kings 18:3-4

3 And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.

4 He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan.

D. The legacy of past kings have effect on the people - their evil influence lives

Micah 6:16 For the statutes of Omri are kept; All the works of Ahab's house are done; And you walk in their counsels, That I may make you a desolation, And your inhabitants a hissing. Therefore you shall bear the reproach of My people."

E. The Powerful

Micah 2:1-3

1 Woe to those who devise iniquity, And work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, Because it is in the power of their hand.

2 They covet fields and take them by violence, Also houses, and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, A man and his inheritance.

3 Therefore thus says the LORD: "Behold, against this family I am devising disaster, From which you cannot remove your necks; Nor shall you walk haughtily, For this is an evil time.

Micah 3:3-5

3 Who also eat the flesh of My people, Flay their skin from them, Break their bones, And chop them in pieces Like meat for the pot, Like flesh in the caldron."

4 Then they will cry to the LORD, But He will not hear them; He will even hide His face from them at that time, Because they have been evil in their deeds.

F. The Rulers – every man, prince, judge, great men

Micah 3:1-5

1 And I said: "Hear now, O heads of Jacob, And you rulers of the house of Israel: Is it not for you to know justice?

2 You who hate good and love evil; Who strip the skin from My people, And the flesh from their bones;

Micah 7:2-4

2 The faithful man has perished from the earth, And there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood; Every man hunts his brother with a net.

3 That they may successfully do evil with both hands -- The prince asks for gifts, The judge seeks a bribe, And the great man utters his evil desire; So they scheme together.

4 The best of them is like a brier; The most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge; The day of your watchman and your punishment comes; Now shall be their perplexity.

G. The Prophets and Religious Leaders

Micah 3:5

5 Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets Who make my people stray; Who chant "Peace" While they chew with their teeth, But who prepare war against him Who puts nothing into their mouths:

Micah 3:5 ASV (1901)

5 Thus saith Jehovah concerning the prophets that make my people to err; that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and whoso putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him:

1. Corruption brings punishment

Micah 3:6-8

6 "Therefore you shall have night without vision, And you shall have darkness without divination; The sun shall go down on the prophets, And the day shall be dark for them.

7 So the seers shall be ashamed, And the diviners abashed; Indeed they shall all cover their lips; For there is no answer from God."

8 But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the LORD, And of justice and might, To declare to Jacob his transgression And to Israel his sin.

2. Justice is demanded and the nation will suffer

Micah 3:9-12

9 Now hear this, You heads of the house of Jacob And rulers of the house of Israel, Who abhor justice And pervert all equity,

10 Who build up Zion with bloodshed And Jerusalem with iniquity:

11 Her heads judge for a bribe, Her priests teach for pay, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD, and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us."

12 Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, And the mountain of the temple Like the bare hills of the forest

III. Corrupt Shepherds

A. Description of the shepherds in Ezekiel's day - Ezekiel 34:1-10

B. The Shepherd of Luke 15:4-7

1. There is a difference between the Good Shepherd to the shepherds of Ezekiel 34
2. He has a love for all His sheep
3. He is willing to leave all in search for one
4. His sheep are not there to be fleeced
5. His sheep are not there to be abused
6. He will make the sacrifice for them

C. Rewriting Luke 15:4-7 - Leaving the ninety-nine to rescue the one lost sheep becomes

1. Scattering all the sheep
2. Scattering the ninety-nine for the sake of one sheep
3. Using the sheep for gain, for advantage, for fleecing

D. The steward entrusted with the household

Luke 12:42-45

42 And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* master will make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of food in due season?

43 "Blessed *is* that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

44 "Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.

45 "But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk,

E. Corrupt elders

1. Destroy the local congregation
2. They will take the state of the local congregation into denominationalism
3. Compare the state of Ephesians 5:27 to Isaiah 1:4-6

Ephesians 5:27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Isaiah 1:4-6

4 Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward.

5 Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints.

6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, *There is* no soundness in it, *But* wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment.

- a. Where there is a fever there is an infection.
- b. Where there are sores there are causes.
- c. Where the church is diseased, rotten, and left to die there is wicked leadership.
- d. Where there are wicked elders the congregation will be diseased, rotten and left to die.
- e. This described the denominational world.

F. A prophesy concerning corrupt and wicked elders

Acts 20:28-29

28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

29 "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

G. Christ's words of warning to the congregation of Ephesus

Revelation 2:5 "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place -- unless you repent.

CONCLUSION

Corrupt Leaders:

1. Are the problem, bringing nothing but evil
2. Will not fully defend the truth
3. Bring church into denominationalism
4. Will not make the sacrifices – all others do that
5. Are the shepherds that eye the flock for their own advantage
6. Will not purge out leaven from the congregation
7. Are part of the leaven in the congregation
8. Are an enemy of those who will do right
9. Are an enemy of Christ
10. Bring punishment from God

What is the solution?

Micah 6:6-8

- 6 With what shall I come before the LORD, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old?
- 7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
- 8 He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?

If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do? (Psalm 11:3)

1. As did Micah against a wicked nation with oppressive leaders
2. As did Elijah against Ahab and Jezebel
3. As did Christ against the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Sanhedrin, the power of Roman

Introduction

Micah, the sixth of the twelve Minor Prophets, bore a name which in itself served as a summary to his book and a challenge to his people - "*Who is like Jehovah?*" The people could erect their high places, build their alters and worship their idols, but in the final analysis there would be no god as great and as glorious, as just and as patient, as loving and as kind as Jehovah. "*Who is like Jehovah?*" (7:18) There is none to compare. As a result, Micah pleaded for penitence among his people. Would-to-God that they had listened. Would-to-God that we would listen.

1. Leaving the familiar surroundings of his rural upbringing, Micah journeys to Jerusalem to deliver his declaration of divine discipline to a corrupt and immoral Judah. He is often called "*the prophet of the poor*" and, as such, he aims his rebukes at the princes, the prophets, and the priests who misuse their God-given authority to cheat the poor and abuse the downtrodden.
 - a. His language is clear; his denunciation is swift; his courage is exemplary. He was a simple servant of God doing his duty.
- B. Looking Back To The Times. Read 1:1 for Micah's own time reference. This would place his work around 740 to 700 B.C.
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1. Micah's clear presentation of the Messianic hope is one of the most outstanding to be found in all the prophets. Two whole chapters are devoted to this theme. Chapter four concerns the coming *kingdom*, while chapter five zeros in on the coming *King*.
2. Read 4:1-3. The reading is virtually parallel with Isaiah 2:2-4. Here is Micah's Messianic prophecy pertaining to the establishment of Jehovah's spiritual kingdom - the church. He answers three questions:



- a. The "*last days*" would be the last days of the Jewish age under the Mosaic Law. During that time "*the mountain of the house of the Lord*" would be established. (The apostle Paul refers to the church as the house of God in 1 Tim. 3:15). Finally, this kingdom would not be exclusive ("for Jews only") for Micah sees all people coming to it. Such was fulfilled in the New Testament when the gospel was preached and men from every nation under heaven responded. See Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16; Acts 10.
 - b. Verse 2b describes exactly what took place years later on Pentecost as prophesied not only by Micah but also by Jesus. See Luke 24:46-48.
 - c. Verse 3 sets forth the nature of the new kingdom - it would be *spiritual* and *peaceful* in nature. It would not be established, defended, or extended by carnal weapons and means.
 - 1) That's why Jesus told Simon to put away his sword (Matt. 26:52). That's why He said to Pilate, "*My kingdom is not of this world...*" (John 18:36). And, that's the reason Jesus instructed Nicodemus saying, "*Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*" And why? Because it is a spiritual kingdom! A fleshly birth puts one into a fleshly kingdom, whereas a spiritual birth puts one into a spiritual kingdom.
 - d. Verse 6-8. Note here that the "*former dominion*" will come again, i.e., the rule of the house of David will be restored in the heavenly reign of Christ, and "*the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion.*" Read Hebrews 12:21-24, 28 which serves as a valuable commentary on this section.
3. Micah saw clearly that the old Zion - Jerusalem with its temporal physical kingdom and house which was subject to destruction and decay - would be succeeded by a new Zion, which, in its superior spiritual quality, would never be destroyed.

- a. In verse 2-5a of the next chapter the prophet sees Him who will rule and reign over the future spiritual kingdom.
- b. *"And this One will be our peace."* See Isaiah 9:6. (For a fuller discussion see pages 113-114).

THE OUTLINE

- A. The book is divided into three sections with the central thought being *Present Judgement but Future Blessing*. The present judgement is because of Israel's unfaithfulness to the Covenant. The future blessing is because of Jehovah's *unchanging faithfulness* to it.

PRESENT JUDGEMENT but FUTURE BLESSING

- I. Imminent Judgement Declared, ch.1-3
- II. Ultimate Blessing Promised, ch.4-5
- III. Present Repentance Pleaded, ch.6-7

IV. TEXT and CONTEXT - A FINAL LOOK...

- A. Imminent Judgement Declared, ch.1-3. Micah begins with a three chapter general declaration of coming calamity upon Judah (1:2-3). And what is the reason for this soon-to-be judgement? 1:5. Her wounds brought on by her sins were incurable (1:9). As a result, Assyria was on the verge of taking even Jerusalem.

1. In 702-701 B.C. king Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah and captured some 46 cities. He then marched on Jerusalem and in his own words had Hezekiah shut up *"like a bird in a cage."* However, due to Hezekiah's faith and Isaiah's prayer (and no doubt Micah's too) - Jerusalem was spared.
 - a. For the historical reference - see 2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chron. 32; and Isa.36-37.
2. In the latter half of the first chapter Micah uses an interesting "play-on-words" to describe the capture of these Judean cities by Sennacherib. The play-on-words would be parallel to our saying: *"In Philadelphia there is no brotherly love."* Paraphrased, it reads:

Tell it not in Gath (*"Tell-town"*)
 Roll yourself in the dust at Beth-le-aphrah (*"Dust-town"*)
 Pass by, inhabitant of Saphir (*"Beauty-town"*) in shameful nakedness
 The inhabitant of Zaanan (*"March-town"*) does not march
 In Beth-ezel (*"Neighbor-town"*) there will be no more neighbor
 The inhabitant of Maroth (*"Bitter-town"*) will receive only bitterness
 Do not harness the horses in Lachish (*"Horse-town"*)
 The houses of Achzib (*"False-spring"*) will become a deception
 Another will take possession of Mareshah (*"Heir-town"*)
 And the glory of Israel will enter Adullam (*a cave of wild beasts*)

3. In the midst of the judgement picture Micah interrupts with a paragraph of encouragement and hope. See 2:12-13. The breaker will be the Messiah who will break down the wall of sin and lead His people in victory.
 - a. One final note... A hundred years later Jeremiah came to appreciate Micah's work and especially what Micah said in 3:12. It saved Jeremiah's life! See Jeremiah 26:16-19,24.

- B. Ultimate Blessing Promised, ch.4-5. Here again is two whole chapters dedicated to the Messianic hope. Three quick points of observation:

1. Micah specifically names the Jerusalem captor: it will not be Assyria, but Babylon! 4:10
2. See 5:7. Those in the New spiritual Israel are to exercise a refreshing spiritual and moral influence among the nations as does the morning dew and welcome rains in a dry land. Jesus said it another way, *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:16).
3. Read 5:15. Here is the key for our nation's survival. No nation can with impunity reject the Christ and His truth and expect to survive.

- C. Present Repentance Plead, ch.6-7. Here is the court scene of Judah's trial. The mountains who have witnessed the whole of Israel's history are called forth as the *jury*. Jehovah is the *prosecuting attorney* and Micah is the *counsel for the defense* (6:1-2).
1. Jehovah's challenge: 6:3-5. Call to mind all the righteous acts of Jehovah and then find one thing of an evil nature that could be charged against Him.
 2. Micah personifies the nation as it searches for a solution to their sinful condition. What does the Lord want? (6:6) Does He expect quantity? (6:7).
 - a. Jehovah's reply is in 6:8.
 - b. The courts judgement: Guilty as charged! (6:13)
 3. Beginning with 7:7 Micah speaks on behalf of the spiritual remnant who confess their sins and turn to Jehovah. They realize Jehovah's judgement is just and yet they have the faith to believe that out of calamity there will come blessing, out of darkness will come light (7:7-9).

Conclusion

1. We again think of Micah's closing question in 7:18 - "*Who is a God like unto Thee?*" How worthy is the God you worship? Ladies and Gentlemen, He is worthy of all that we would possibly give and so much more.
 - a. We close remembering the words and music of Tillit S. Teddlie, who wrote:

*Worthy of praise is Christ our Redeemer;
Worthy of glory, honor and power!
Worthy of all our soul's adoration...
Worthy art Thou! Worthy art Thou!*

Lesson Seven

INTRODUCTION:

1. Micah's name means "Who is like Jehovah?" He lived at "Moreseth Gath on the main road to the Maritime plain and Egypt in the Shephelah (the foot-hill country) off about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem. The city, which lies at the edge of good farming country, is not elsewhere mentioned in Scripture." (The Minor Prophets, Leurs, p. 32)
2. Background material for Micah is II Kings 15:32- 20:21; II Chron. 27:1-32:33.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO MICAH IN THE DAYS OF JOTHAM, AHAZ, AND HEZEKIAH (Micah 1:1)

A. THE KINGS AND THEIR REIGNS

16 Years	16 Years	29 Years
Jotham	Ahaz	Hezekiah
II Kgs. 15:32	II Kgs. 16:]	II Kgs. 18:1
750-735 B.C.	735-715 B.C.	715-687 B.C.

- B. Since Micah prophesied during the days of the kings then the minimum time was 20 years and the maximum was 55 to 60 years.
- C. We know very little about Micah's personal experiences, but he "was a man of the Spirit ready to prophesy." (3:8).

II. MICAH VERY CLEARLY REVEALS THE SINS OF JUDAH.

- A. "The sins of immorality and sensuality characteristic of urban life receive little attention. His burden is the lot of the small farmer in the area of Moasheth -Gath the oppressions he suffered, and the impact of the Assyrian invasion upon him. Micah deals with social morality and religious duty in a way that is distinctive to him." (The Minor Prophets, Levis, p. 33)
- B. Micah talks about different evil doers and problems.
 1. There were the land-grabbers.
 - a. They lay awake at night figuring how to force the poor off his land. (2:1,2)
 - b. The drove the women and children out of their houses. (2:9)
 - c. No one was to be trusted as a man might be the victims of his own relatives. 7:5-7
 2. The scant measures and wicked weights were used. 6:10,11
 3. There were juvenile delinquent problems. 7:6
 4. There were those willing to listen to preaching on wine and strong drink (2:11) but refused to believe disaster could come as Micah said.(2:6)
 5. There were the wicked rulers.
 - a. They hated good and loved evil. 3:1-3
 - b. They took bribes and closed their eyes to justice. 7:3; 3:1
 - c. They are compared to butchers, or cannibals or wild beast. 3:3.
 - d. They thought to build up Jerusalem with blood. 3:10.
 6. There was the false prophet who divined for money. 3:11 "Pay the prophet and he answers you that what you want to do is right; neglect him and he declares war on you (3:5) " (Lewis)
 7. The priest taught for hire (3:11) thinking the Lord was with them all the time

8. "He faced a people who thought that because they were God's people their security would not be destroyed (3:11) and that God's favor could be bought with sacrifice (6:5-7)." (Lewis)

III. MICAH GIVES A CLEAR PICTURE OF WHAT TRUE RELIGION REALLY IS:

- A. God's demands are not unreasonable but in reality are three: Justice, kindness, and walking humbly with God. 6:8.
- B. "This statement of Micah is universally recognized as one of the greatest passages of the Old Testament, stressing that worship and morality cannot be divorced from each other. They are two sides of the same coin. (The Minor Prophets, Lewis, p. 36)

IV. MICAH AND THE FUTURE .

(Jack Lewis, in his book The Minor Prophets gives these thoughts.)

- A. The Remnant. Despite his severe threats, Micah is not a prophet devoid of hope. He envisions, a remnant that will survive the calamity (2:12, 5:7,8). This doctrine is greatly elaborated by his contemporary Isaiah.
- B. The New Exodus. Micah envisions a return comparable to the exodus. God, at its head, leads the way as a ram opens the way for a flock (Exod. 13:21; cf. Mic. 2:12,13). Micah speaks of marvels comparable to those of the exodus (7:14-17).
- C. The Law will go forth from Zion. (4:1 ff). Micah and Isaiah (Isa. 2:2ff.) in similar words describe this phenomenon, though each has his distinctive elements. We have no means of knowing which used it first. This is a passage not specifically appealed to in the New Testament, but which was understood by the early church fathers to refer to the Christian age (Justin Martyr, Dial. 110; Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. 4.34.4).
- D. The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, the birthplace of David (5:2; cf.] Sam. 17:12). Though 2 Samuel 7 connects the Messiah with the Davidic house, Micah is the first to point to his city. It is this passage that guided the wise men (Matt. 2:6).
- E. Mercy after Judgement (7: 18-20). The fundamental character of God is his mercy. Micah declares that the Lord is his light (7:8-10).
(The Minor Prophets, Lewis, p. 37)

QUESTIONS

Lesson Seven

TRUE OR FALSE

1. _____ Micah was a prophet to Israel.
2. _____ God said all their graven images would be beaten to pieces.
3. _____ Judah wound (sins) was incurable.
4. _____ Landgrabbers lay awake at night planning evil schemes.
5. _____ God promised to do good to him that walked uprightly.
6. _____ Israel liked to prophet who lied to them and made them feel secure.

7. _____ The rulers were responsible for judgement.
8. _____ God said he would hide his face from the evil rulers.
9. _____ Micah said he was full of the spirit of the Lord.
10. _____ God said zion would be plowed as a field.
11. _____ Micah 4:1,2 says about the same thing as Isaiah 2:2,3.
12. _____ Micah 4:3-5 describe a state of peace.
13. _____ Micah told Judah she would go to Assyria.
14. _____ In Micah 4:11,12 the enemies of the Lord made plans against Judah, but knew not God's thoughts.
15. _____ Micah prophesied the place of Christ's birth.
16. _____ Micah 5:2 is quoted in Matthew 2:5,6.
17. _____ The land of Assyria was to be wasted with the sword.
18. _____ Jews would be scattered among many people following the captivity.(5:7)
19. _____ God's vengeance would come on the heathen.
20. _____ God did not plead with Israel.
21. _____ The rich men were full of violence.
22. _____ They would eat and be satisfied.
23. _____ Israel was still following the works of Ahab.
24. _____ There were many good men in Micah's day.
25. _____ Wickedness was so great that one could not even trust his friend.

DISCUSSION AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS.

1. What did God mean when he said of Judah---"for her wound is incurable?" _____

2. What were land grabber planning as they lay in bed at night? (2:1-3) _____

3. What were the princes of Israel supposed to know? _____
4. Why did God say he would hide his face when his people cried unto him? _____

5. With what were the rulers building up zion and Jerusalem? _____

6. Why did the wicked judges, priests and prophets think no evil could come upon them? (3:11) _____

7. What is the house of the Lord in 4:1? _____

When was it to be established? _____

From what place was the law of this house to go forth? _____

8. From where did God tell Israel he had brought them? _____

9. What three things does Micah say God requires of man ? a. _____

b. _____ c. _____

10. What kind of man did Micah say had perished/ _____

11. To whom did he say he would look for his salvation? _____



Introduction

Micah, the sixth of the twelve Minor Prophets, bore a name which in itself served as a summary to his book and a challenge to his people - "Who is like Jehovah?" The people could erect their high places, build their alters and worship their idols, but in the final analysis there would be no god as great and as glorious, as just and as patient, as loving and as kind as Jehovah. "Who is like Jehovah?" (7:18) There is none to compare. As a result, Micah pleaded for penitence among his people. Would-to-God that they had listened. Would-to-God that we would listen.

1. Leaving the familiar surroundings of his rural upbringing, Micah journeys to Jerusalem to deliver his declaration of divine discipline to a corrupt and immoral Judah. He is often called "the prophet of the poor" and, as such, he aims his rebukes at the princes, the prophets, and the priests who misuse their God-given authority to cheat the poor and abuse the downtrodden.
 - a. His language is clear; his denunciation is swift; his courage is exemplary. He was a simple servant of God doing his duty.
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B. Micah's Messiah. The Old Testament message relates that *man was made in the image of God* but found that image obscured by sin. The New Testament message tells how *God was made in the image of man* in order to take away sin and restore the divine image. Micah deals with both by emphasizing the problem of sin and at the same time heralding the coming of the Christ.

1. Micah's clear presentation of the Messianic hope is one of the most outstanding to be found in all the prophets. Two whole chapters are devoted to this theme. ~~Chapter four concerns the coming kingdom, while chapter five zeros in on the coming King.~~

2. Read 4:1-3. The reading is virtually parallel with Isaiah 2:2-4. Here is Micah's Messianic prophecy pertaining to the establishment of Jehovah's spiritual kingdom the church. He answers three questions:



a. The "last days" would be the last days of the Jewish age under the Mosaic Law. During that time "the mountain of the house of the Lord" would be established. (The apostle Paul refers to the church as the house of God in 1 Tim. 3:15). Finally, this kingdom would not be exclusive ("for Jews only") for Micah sees all people coming to it. Such was fulfilled in the New Testament when the gospel was preached and men from every nation under heaven responded. See Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16; Acts 10.

b. Verse 2b describes exactly what took place years later on Pentecost as prophesied not only by Micah but also by Jesus. See Luke 24:46-48.

c. Verse 3 sets forth the nature of the new kingdom - it would be *spiritual* and *peaceful* in nature. It would not be established, defended, or extended by carnal weapons and means.

1) That's why Jesus told Simon to put away his sword (Matt. 26:52). That's why He said to Pilate, *"My kingdom is not of this world..."* (John 18:36). And, that's the reason Jesus instructed Nicodemus saying, *"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* And why? Because it is a spiritual kingdom! A fleshly birth puts one into a fleshly kingdom, whereas a spiritual birth puts one into a spiritual kingdom.

d. Verse 6-8. Note here that the *"former dominion"* will come again, i.e., the rule of the house of David will be restored in the heavenly reign of Christ, and *"the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion."* Read Hebrews 12:21-24, 28 which serves as a valuable commentary on this section.

3. Micah saw clearly that the old Zion - Jerusalem with its temporal physical kingdom and house which was subject to destruction and decay - would be succeeded by a new Zion, which, in its superior spiritual quality, would never be destroyed.

- a. In verse 2-5a of the next chapter the prophet sees Him who will rule and reign over the future spiritual kingdom.
- b. "And this One will be our peace." See Isaiah 9:6. (For a fuller discussion see pages 113-114).

I. THE OUTLINE

- A. The book is divided into three sections with the central thought being *Present Judgement but Future Blessing*. The present judgement is because of Israel's *unfaithfulness* to the Covenant. The future blessing is because of Jehovah's *unchanging Faithfulness* to it.

PRESENT JUDGEMENT but FUTURE BLESSING

- I. Imminent Judgement Declared, ch.1-3
- II. Ultimate Blessing Promised, ch.4-5
- III. Present Repentance Pleaded, ch.6-7

IV. TEXT and CONTEXT - A FINAL LOOK...

- A. Imminent Judgement Declared, ch.1-3. Micah begins with a three chapter general declaration of coming calamity upon Judah (1:2-3). And what is the reason for this soon-to-be judgement? 1:5. Her wounds brought on by her sins were incurable (1:9). As a result, Assyria was on the verge of taking even Jerusalem.

1. In 702-701 B.C. king Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah and captured some 46 cities. He then marched on Jerusalem and in his own words had Hezekiah shut up "like a bird in a cage." However, due to Hezekiah's faith and Isaiah's prayer (and no doubt Micah's too) - Jerusalem was spared.
 - a. For the historical reference - see 2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chron. 32; and Isa.36-37.
2. In the latter half of the first chapter Micah uses an interesting "play-on-words" to describe the capture of these Judean cities by Sennacherib. The play-on-words would be parallel to our saying: "In Philadelphia there is no brotherly love." Paraphrased, it reads:

Tell it not in Gath ("Tell-town")
 Roll yourself in the dust at Beth-le-aphrah ("Dust-town")
 Pass by, inhabitant of Saphir ("Beauty-town") in shameful nakedness
 The inhabitant of Zaanen ("March-town") does not march
 In Beth-ezel ("Neighbor-town") there will be no more neighbor
 The inhabitant of Maroth ("Bitter-town") will receive only bitterness
 Do not harness the horses in Lachish ("Horse-town")
 The houses of Achzib ("False-spring") will become a deception
 Another will take possession of Mareshah ("Heir-town")
 And the glory of Israel will enter Adullam (a cave of wild beasts)

3. In the midst of the judgement picture Micah interrupts with a paragraph of encouragement and hope. See 2:12-13. The breaker will be the Messiah who will break down the wall of sin and lead His people in victory.
 - a. One final note... A hundred years later Jeremiah came to appreciate Micah's work and especially what Micah said in 3:12. It saved Jeremiah's life! See Jeremiah 26:16-19,24.

- B. Ultimate Blessing Promised, ch.4-5. Here again is two whole chapters dedicated to the Messianic hope. Three quick points of observation:

1. Micah specifically names the Jerusalem captor: it will not be Assyria, but Babylon! 4:10
2. See 5:7. Those in the New spiritual Israel are to exercise a refreshing spiritual and moral influence among the nations as does the morning dew and welcome rains in a dry land. Jesus said it another way, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).
3. Read 5:15. Here is the key for our nation's survival. No nation can with impunity reject the Christ and His truth and expect to survive.

C. Present Repentance Pleaded, ch.6-7. Here is the court scene of Judah's trial. The mountains who have witnessed the whole of Israel's history are called forth as the jury. Jehovah is the prosecuting attorney and Micah is the counsel for the defense (6:1-2).

1. Jehovah's challenge: 6:3-5. Call to mind all the righteous acts of Jehovah and then find one thing of an evil nature that could be charged against Him.
 2. Micah personifies the nation as it searches for a solution to their sinful condition. What does the Lord want? (6:6) Does He expect quantity? (6:7).
 - a. Jehovah's reply is in 6:8.
 - b. The courts judgement: Guilty as charged! (6:13)
- 15A. 1:11-15
MT. 23: 27-28
- Beginning with 7:7 Micah speaks on behalf of the spiritual remnant who confess their sins and turn to Jehovah. They realize Jehovah's judgement is just and yet they have the faith to believe that out of calamity there will come blessing, out of darkness will come light (7:7-9).

Conclusion

1. We again think of Micah's closing question in 7:18 - "Who is a God like unto Thee?" How worthy is the God you worship? Ladies and Gentlemen, He is worthy of all that we would possibly give and so much more.
 - a. We close remembering the words and music of Tillit S. Teddlie, who wrote:

*Worthy of praise is Christ our Redeemer;
Worthy of glory, honor and power!
Worthy of all our soul's adoration...
Worthy art Thou! Worthy art Thou!*

NAHUM:

"All their faces are drained of colour" (Nahum 2: 10) - Lessons from the fall of Nineveh

Jimmie B. Hill

"She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness" (Nahum 2:10 - KJV). This is how the inspired prophet Nahum described the capital city of Assyria, Nineveh. ***"Empty"*** and ***"void"*** and ***"waste"*** was the prophets prediction of the utter ruin that was to come to that once magnificent city. It was Sennacherib who made Nineveh such a magnificent city. He laid out new streets and built beautiful squares, parks, gardens, and water works throughout the city and built within its wall the famous "palace without rival." It is said that the palace took ten thousand workers twenty years to build and took fifteen million tons of earth and brick to complete it.

Its population was around six hundred thousand. The city was founded by Nimrod, who was the great grandson of Noah (Genesis 10:11). The city was sixty miles in circumference and its walls were one hundred feet high. The wall itself was an ancient marvel. It was so thick that four chariots could drive along side by side at the same time. It had fifteen hundred defense towers that were two hundred feet high and fifteen gates. For further defense, there was a moat around the city that was one hundred forty feet wide and sixty feet deep.

The remainder of verse ten is a description of the aggravated state of mind that the citizens of Nineveh would experience at the great destruction of their beloved city. The phrase, ***"...the faces of them all gather blackness"*** of the King James Version, is an unusual rendering of the Hebrew. Some versions have translated ***"blackness"*** as ***"drained of color"*** while others read ***"black fear"*** or ***"waxed pale."*** In each of these renderings, however, the idea is that the terrible and complete destruction on the city would have a grave effect upon its citizens that would be shown in their faces.

Consider this quote from page 66, *Myers, Ancient History*.

"Saracus, who came to the throne towards the end of the 7th century B.C., was the last of the long line of Assyrian kings. For nearly or quite six centuries the Ninevite kings had now lorded it over the East. There was scarcely a state in all Western Asia that during this time had not, in the language of the royal inscriptions, 'borne the heavy yoke of their lordship,' scarcely a people that had not suffered their cruel punishments, or tasted the bitterness of enforced exile. But now swift misfortunes were bearing down upon the oppressor from every quarter. Egypt revolted and tore Syria away from the empire; from the mountain defiles on the east issued the armies of the recent-grown empire of the Aryan Medes, led by the renowned Cyaxares; from the southern lowlands, anxious to aid in the overthrow of the hated oppressor, the Babylonians joined the Medes as allies, and together they laid close siege to Nineveh. The city was finally taken and sacked [plundered], and dominion passed away forever from the proud capital. Two hundred years later, when Xenophon with his Ten Thousand

Greeks, in his memorable retreat passed the spot, the once great city was a crumbling mass of ruins of which he could not even learn the name."

The Assyrians were a very cruel and war-like people. They had reigned supreme in the region for almost two hundred and fifty years. However, though they could win wars, once their enemies were conquered, they could not control nor rule them. Neither would they repent before Jehovah God!

It is ironic that "Nahum" means "comfort or compassion." Nahum announces Jehovah God's displeasure with Nineveh and seems to very glad concerning the impending downfall and doom that lies before the city. He has been referred to as "The Prophet of Vengeance" which seemed to be a source of obvious comfort to Judah. His home was Elkosh which was probably in Galilee. The meaning of the word "Capernaum" means "village of Nahum." He was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah.

The theme of the book of Nahum is the destruction of Nineveh and this is the second book of the Bible that deals with Nineveh. The first book was the book of Jonah which was written approximately 100–150 years before the book of Nahum. The book was probably written about 612 B.C., which was just shortly before the fall of Nineveh.

In the book of Nahum, one can see the vengeance and the slow anger of God (Nahum 1:1-7). This is the same message that Jonah preached some 100-150 years earlier. The text teaches that, although Nineveh had received the message before, the Lord's longsuffering must not be interpreted as indifference or a lack of power. God, throughout time, has been patient and longsuffering. Many in the Old Testament believed, just as many do today, that because sin is not immediately punished that it will never be punished. The book of Nahum shows the reader that this is not so! Jehovah God does get angry and when His anger is made manifest by His actions, nothing will stop or pervert His will (Nahum 1:2, 3; 6; 8-14). The Lord was taking care of Judah and His destruction of Nineveh was the deliverance of the Jews (Nahum 1:15).

Although the Bible does not tell us exactly who overthrew Nineveh, history reveals that it was primarily the Medes, Chaldeans, and Scythians. However, the careful reader can see Jehovah God's hand in it. The Tigris River rose and flooded during this time and washed away part of the great defensive walls of Nineveh (Nahum 1:8, 9). There were chariots in the streets, there was a call to defend the city but without response, they had an abundance of "things" but nothing would help (Nahum 2:1-9).

It is interesting that the symbol of Assyria was the lion. Lions have no fear. They live by themselves in prides and protect and provide for one another. Any outsider is devoured. In Nahum 2:11-13, the reader will see that now the enemies of Assyria were going to treat them the way they had been treated. Jehovah God taught Nineveh that they were to reap that which they had sown.

In chapter three, the reader can see a very vivid and haunting picture of war. Chariots can be heard, horses are jumping with fright, and there are the numerous bodies of the slain scattered throughout the streets (vs. 1-3).

The great and powerful city is portrayed as a harlot that has been stripped, cast down, and has been covered with appalling filth (Nahum 3:4-6). Nahum then tells Nineveh that she is no better than No Amon (Nahum 3:8; Jeremiah 46:25; Ezekiel 30:14-16). This was the city of Thebes which was located in Egypt four miles south of Cairo. This city had a large

population, it had allies, and it was protected by the sea. Yet, like Nineveh, when Jehovah God's judgment was made, it was no more secure than the ripe fig shaken by the wind and ruined (Nahum 3:12).

Also in chapter three, Nahum condemns those whose trust is in bricks and mortar. Mockingly, the prophet tells the Ninevites to draw water for the making of bricks to fortify the city for their defense (v.14). He then mocks the instability of Nineveh's leadership and how fleeting their power was against God (vs. 17, 18).

Then, in chapter three and verse nineteen, Nahum states that Nineveh is a wound that will not heal. The people of the earth would applaud their downfall. Some twenty years later this prophecy was fulfilled.

When Jehovah God releases His wrath and vengeance, nothing can stand in His way. The prophet stated that the destruction of Nineveh would be complete and final. And the destruction of Nineveh was so complete that when Alexander the Great marched over her ruins, he did not know that he marched over one of the greatest of the world empires of the past. The ruins of Nineveh were not discovered until 1842. Today there is a mound at the site of this once great city that is one mile long, six hundred fifty yards wide and ninety feet high. God's fulfills His promises!

From the book of Nahum, one can learn of God's nature. Yes, He is slow to anger, His is good, and He is a stronghold and a refuge. But there is a limit to His patience. One day His mercy and grace will be finished. We also learn that God gets furious and when He releases His great power, kingdoms will fall. Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, all fell.

We learn from the book of Nahum that Jehovah God will unleash His great power against brutality, idolatry, immorality, and all iniquity.

The only kingdom that will survive is the Kingdom of God, the church. It was prophesied (Daniel 2:44), it was established (Mathew 16:18), and will not be shaken (Hebrews 12:28). It will last forever!

Introduction

Nahum, the Nineveh prophet, is a man with a single message - *the doom and destruction of Nineveh*, capital of Assyria, and (when Nahum wrote) the world's greatest city. It is noteworthy that *two* of the twelve Minor Prophets are devoted entirely to Nineveh. Over a century earlier, Jonah had lifted up his voice pleading Jehovah's cause in the great streets of Nineveh (Jonah 3:4). The Gentile city responded, repented, and the supreme Judge of the universe granted a "stay of execution."

1. But now, one hundred years later, Nahum issues his written warning and predicts the downfall of the once-mighty Nineveh. The Assyrians had soon forgotten their spiritual revival (under Jonah) and returned to their habits of violence, idolatry and arrogance.
 - a. • They must now learn, through Nahum, that "*Jehovah is a jealous God*" (1:2).
 - b. • They must now learn that wrath *restrained* (in Jonah's day) is wrath *reserved*, if there is a wilful return to wickedness (1:2b). And,
 - c. • They must now learn that, not only is Jehovah slow to anger and great in power (as announced by the previous prophet), but that "*He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished*" (1:3).
2. Nineveh would be destroyed so completely that no trace of the city would remain - a prophecy fulfilled in painful detail as the ancient city lay obliterated and undiscovered *for nearly 2,500 years!*

BODY

I. THE NATURE OF NINEVEH AND NAHUM: THE CITY AND THE MAN

- A. The Nature of Nineveh: It's *Vastness* and *Vileness*. Beyond all doubt, Nineveh is one of the most remarkable cities in history. She was the showcase of the proud Assyrian world. It was ~~60~~ miles around her walls - walls that were 100 feet high and so wide that three chariots could be driven abreast. The walls were fortified by 1,500 towers, each 200 feet high. The population was estimated in Jonah's day to be about one million and no doubt even more by Nahum's time.
 1. But Nineveh's vastness was eclipsed by her *vileness* (1:14b). The brutality of the Assyrians was such as would make the flesh creep. Their thirst for blood and gore was gruesome. They were cruel. They were violent. They were barbaric.
 - a. King Assurbanipal (the ruling monarch during Nahum's day) was exceptionally cruel. He boasts of tearing off the lips and limbs of defeated kings and nailing them to the city walls. He brags of compelling a foreign prince to wear around his neck the decapitated head of his king, and how he and his queen once feasted in a garden with the head of a ~~B~~abylonian ruler (whom he had forced to commit suicide) hanging from a tree above them.
 2. Nineveh was the proudest and fiercest, as well as the vilest of cities. The surrounding peoples cringed at her feet. She swelled with arrogance in the imagination of her seeming invulnerability. She was intoxicated on pride and drunk on the power of conquest. And...she was at the height of her glory (1:12; 3:16).
 - a. Thus, Nahum and the poor people of Judah were spectators of all these horrors. They had, for generations, beheld an almost endless succession of Assyrian invasions into their homeland. They appeared to be helpless in the hands of a cruel, tyrannical enemy.
 3. With her pride, oppression, idolatry and bloodthirsty behavior she was now operating in open defiance to the sovereign Jehovah. Strangely enough, in a time when the nation showed absolutely no signs of decay, Nahum publishes the irreversible Divine decree of certain doom and destruction.
 - a. God had had enough!
 - b. We are reminded of the apostle's statement in Romans 11:22, "*Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God*" — His goodness through Jonah / His severity through Nahum.
 4. Such was Nineveh, the capital city of the most powerful, sensual, ferocious, and diabolically atrocious race of men that perhaps ever existed in all the world. It is little wonder that the prophet concludes his Nineveh oracle by saying:

All who hear about you will clap their hands over you, For on whom has not your evil passed continually? (3:19)

- B. The Nature of Nahum: God's Humble Servant. Of this prophet practically nothing is known. He is simply "Nahum the Elkoshite" (1:1) - a place whose present-day location is uncertain. It is believed by some that he was of Galilee, his name being preserved in the Galilean city of Capernaum, which literally means "Village of Nahum." However, such is only speculation. There is just as much evidence to suggest that he did not come from Galilee (see John 7:52).
1. While little biographical information can be ascertained about Nahum the man - we can know with certainty the *time* of his work. In 3:8-10 the prophet alludes to the overthrow of No-amon, which was the ancient city of Thebes located next to the Nile in south-central Egypt. We now know, from historical documents, that the Assyrian king, Assurbanipal, overthrew the city in 663 B.C.
 - a. Thus, it was after the fall of Thebes (663 B.C.) and before the fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.) that Nahum composed his prophetic doom-song about Nineveh.
 2. We see in Nahum a principle that is illustrated throughout the sacred scriptures, namely - the power is in God's *message* and not in God's *man*! God has never depended on the greatness of man in the exercise and execution of His divine will. Rather, He has chosen insignificant and obscure mortals who would humbly do His will and preach His word.
 - a. Who was David the king but a shepherd boy called to God's service? Who was Amos but a farmer from Tekoa? And Micah, and Habbakkuk and Zephaniah? And... You and I?
 - b. And when our Lord chose those to whom He would entrust the most precious news ever to fall from the lips of man - He chose fishermen, tax collectors and tentmakers. Yes, God's power of salvation would not reside in the *men* but in the *message* they spoke (1 Cor. 2:4-5; 3:5-7).
 3. And while there appears an occasional Solomon with talents almost beyond measure, for the greater part God's gospel has been, is, and always will be preached by humble, obscure and insignificant men who love God, His truth and the souls of men (1 Cor. 1:26).
 - a. Such was Nahum - an insignificant man of obscurity, a "nobody" in the eyes of the world, but a "somebody" in the eyes of God.

II. THE LIVING LESSONS OF NAHUM

- A. The Divine Personality. Nahum presents a four-fold picture of the personality of God:
- W 1. A God of Patience, 1:3a. If any city should have been acutely aware of divine patience and longsuffering it was Nineveh. A century earlier God's patience had worn thin with the wicked city, thus, Jonah was sent offering the eleventh hour Jehovah appeal (Jonah 3:4-5, 9-10). Now things had progressed from bad to worse. God's patience had ended. His anger was growing.
 - a. God has always provided man every opportunity to escape destruction (Rom. 2:4-6) & to repent of sin (Reve. 2:21).
 - 1) He was patient with nations - murmuring Israel, sinful Judah, and now Gentile Assyria.
 - 2) He was patient with kings - Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar and the rulers of the divided kingdom.
 - 3) He was patient with ordinary folks like those Jerusalem Jews who crucified His beloved Son...and like Peter and Saul of Tarsus.
 - 4) And...I'm thankful daily that He is patient with me! How about you?
 - b. And why is He so patient? Why does He continue to put up with things that are detestable to Him? Why does He still take and take and take those who blaspheme His very name? And why does He continue to allow this old world full of sin and filth, full of degradation and ungodliness of every sort to go on?
 - 1) The apostle Peter has the simple answer in 2 Peter 3:9.
- W 2. A God of Power, 1:3a. Man may come to possess great and awesome power but there is no power like Jehovah's power (Psa. 62:11; Reve. 19:1).

(a.) The great power of God was manifested in the very beginning when He spoke the worlds into existence (Psa. 33:6,9). His power was seen in a little boat on the Sea of Galilee by a dozen doubting disciples who heard the Master say: "Peace be still!" God's power was seen by the two Mary's who came early on the first day of the week to anoint the body of Jesus and heard the announcement that changed the world - "He is not here, He is risen!" And His power was felt in the first century by a band of saints who were pitted in a fight to the death against the strongest earthly empire that ever existed - an empire whose emperors were dedicated to eradicating the newly-born church of Christ from the face of the earth. It was the little camp of the saints verses the whole Roman world. If such were to stand or fall on natural terms the victor would be certain. But as Paul said in Romans 8:31: "If God is for us, who is against us?" As a result God's power was felt, and today the Lord's church is growing, thriving and spreading while the ancient Roman world lies in dust and ashes (Reve.20:9).

b. There is no power like the power of our great God. The truth of that statement would soon be graphically illustrated in the Assyrian capital city.

3. *A God of Vengeance*, 1:3b. Though God will forgive sin repented of, He will not condone sin persisted in. "God is not mocked," and as Nahum says - there is no way of escaping Him. See also Ex. 34:6-7.

a. Herein is the key to the book. Compassion can never be exercised at the expense of righteousness. God's love and longsuffering must never be understood as weakness or tolerance toward sin.

b. With Nineveh - there must be a settling of accounts. See Hebrews 10:30-31. God's vengeance is *actual*, it is *active*, it is *absolute*. Nineveh's time had come (1:6a). The *verdict of vengeance* had been issued.

4. *A God of Good*, 1:7. On the other hand, to those who seek Jehovah, He is good (Psa. 100:5; 46:1; 86:4-5). There is no questioning the goodness of Jehovah. Nineveh herself had earlier been an eyewitness to that goodness. He had (by His goodness) given them another chance. They wasted it.

a. The ultimate statement of God's goodness? John 3:16

B. The Unchangeable Jehovah. Old-time Nineveh stands as one of God's special object-lessons to rulers and nations of every age. The same God who ruled in Nineveh's day, rules in ours. He is just as compassionate today as He was then. He is equally as caring with Americans as with Assyrians. He is just as forgiving today as then. But people, we need to understand that He is also just as uncompromising toward sin now as He ever was.

a. God is inflexible when it comes to principles of righteousness, and intolerant when it comes to wickedness - IN EVERY AGE!

(C) God's Sovereign World-Wide Rule. As we make our study through these Hebrew prophets, we must be impressed with the sovereign rule of God over nations and history.

1. The study of history marks the rise and fall of nations. Great ones too - like Assyria and Babylon, like Greece and Rome. These empires ruled the world and predicated their rulership on the theme: "*might is right and man's wisdom is supreme*." They sought and attained their own glory; they gloried in the arm of flesh; they refused to honor God - they fell!

2. If you know history you know that all of the ancient kingdoms of renown have met their death and doom. That is, all but one!

a. God's kingdom of spiritual believers in Christ (the Church), which was predicted by the prophets and announced by the apostles, has endured since its beginning on Pentecost and will continue to endure having no end (Dan. 2:44; Matt. 16:18).

D. The Nineveh Mistake - A Failure To Teach. Here is the important principle of communication to the next generation. Nineveh's revival was short-lived, not because the people involved were insincere in their repentance, but because they failed to pass on their newfound knowledge of God to the succeeding generation. As the years rolled along, Jonah, the "prophet from the sea," and the great God he represented, were largely forgotten. The spiritual revival dwindled and died, and in its place returned all of

the old pagan practices.

1. How can we under estimate the importance of communicating our faith to our offspring? Read Joshua 2:10. Here is a generation who forgot to teach and another who forgot to learn.
 - a. How can we ever take the world for the Lord when we lose our own? God help us not to make the Nineveh mistake with our children.

III. THE OUTLINE

- A. The book of Nahum could have easily been placed in the poetic section. The pace is rapid and excited. The style is forceful, brilliant, and lifelike. One writer remarked -

His language is strong and brilliant; his rhythm rumbles and roles, leaps and flashes, like the horsemen and chariots he describes.

1. The book begins with a description of the attributes of God and then goes into a three chapter discussion of Nineveh's fall.
 - a. Chapter one asserts the *certainty* of Nineveh's fall.
 - b. Chapter two depicts the *capture* of the city. And,
 - c. Chapter three tells of the *wickedness* which provoked her doom.

The Lord Will By No Means Leave The Guilty Unpunished

Chapter 1	➤	Nineveh's Doom <i>DECLARED</i>
Chapter 2	➤	Nineveh's Doom <i>DESCRIBED</i>
Chapter 3	➤	Nineveh's Doom <i>DESERVED</i>

HITTING THE HIGHLIGHTS

- A. Nineveh's Doom Declared, ch.1. Verses 2-8 present a poetic picture of the wrath of God as it is unleashed upon Assyria. His conduct must harmonize with His character - and it does. He is a merciful God but also a God of justice, and now justice must be served. Verse 6a serves as a summary question: *"Who can stand...Who can endure?"* Certainly not Nineveh! Certainly not any nation who faces the wrath of God.
1. Verse 8 is interesting. In 614 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon headed a coalition of all the enemies of Assyria. For two years they laid siege to the city of Nineveh. It appeared that the Assyrians might hold out. However, heavy rains came and flooded the Tigris river which in turn swept away a huge section of the city wall. Through this gap the enemy forced their way and captured the city. See 3:13; 2:6.
 - a. Verse 9 - Jehovah would make a *"complete end"* of Assyria. Distress for God's people would never again arise out of Nineveh.
 2. Verse 11 probably refers to king Sennacherib who attacked Jerusalem in Hezekiah's day. See Isa. 36:1-2a, 14-20; 37:36. Sennacherib insinuated that Jehovah didn't have the power to protect His people. (Boy, was he wrong!)
 3. Verse 14b is the verdict of vengeance. Nineveh would fall and Judah would be blessed by the news (vs.15).
 - a. In verse 15b Nahum challenges God's people to remain faithful to God's covenant. No doubt, during the days of the Sennacherib invasion they had made vows to God, that if He would deliver them out of their distress, they would perform greater service. Now Nahum reminds them to perform that which they had promised.
 - 1) Is there a lesson there for us?
- B. Nineveh's Doom Described, ch.2. Here is a prophetic preview of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion (vs.1). Verse 3-4 describe the terrors of the invading enemy. Their shields drip red with Assyrian blood. The soldiers themselves are drenched scarlet with the blood of battle. As the chariots approached the city, their charge was so swift that

their wheels were striking sparks upon the stones.

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Conclusion

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ON THE ONE HAND...

"The Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished."
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trouble, And He knows those
who take refuge in Him." (1:7)*

- a. In which group do you belong?

LESSON EIGHT

INTRODUCTION:

1. Read the book of Nahum.
2. Nahum means "comfort" or "full of comfort."
3. He calls himself the Elhoshite which signifies a native of Elhosh, the exact location not being known.
4. Nahum's theme is the overthrow of Nineveh. Nineveh was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Assyria, that cruel and wicked power. "Assyria, of which Nineveh was the capital, was a nation largely geared for aggressive war. Its atrocities were proverbial as the records and the art left by its kings make quite clear. Though it could conquer the world, it proved unable to rule it. Its victims lay prone under tyranny, but no national spirit breathed in the corpus. No peace organization of any proper kind existed to keep the whole together. Nineveh saw men and nations as tools to be exploited to gratify the lust of conquest and commercialism. Assyria existed to render no service to mankind." (The Minor Prophets, page 55).
 - a. Under Jonah's preaching, 100 or more years before, Nineveh had repented, but now they have turned back into their wicked ways.
 - b. "In the book of Jonah, God forgave Nineveh; in Nahum he announces and executes its doom." (Lewis).
5. The exact time of Nahum's prophecy is not known but his allusion to the downfall of No (3:8) or Thebes, which took place in about 667 B.C. and completely destroyed in 661 B.C., as well as his prophecy against Nineveh, which was destroyed in 612 B.C. shows that he prophesied sometime between 661 B.C. and 612 B.C.

DISCUSSION:I. THE PROPER DIVISION OF NAHUM.

- A. The chapter contents are:
 1. The majesty of God in judgment and mercy. (ch. 1)
 2. Nineveh's siege and destruction (ch. 2).
 3. The reason for Nineveh's fall. (ch. 3).
- B. The first section deals with the coming of the Lord in judgment (on Nineveh) before "whose wrath the physical world trembles."
- C. The second section describes the downfall of Nineveh despite all her efforts to escape.

II. WHAT KIND OF GOD IS YOUR GOD?

- A. The God described by Nahum was Nineveh's God as well as Israel's God.
- B. There are a number of characteristics listed:
 1. God is a personal God - "furious" (jealous, margin). v. 2a.
 2. God is a just God - avengeth. v. 2b.
 3. God is a God slow to anger. v. 3a.
 4. God is great in power. v. 3b.
 5. God is a good God - "he will not at all acquit the wicked." v. 3, 7a.
 6. God is a stronghold - refuge. v. 7b.
 7. God is not only a God of love, but one of wrath - he hates sin. (2:1).
 - a. Nahum had the ability to be angry with sin and rejoice over its downfall.
 - b. God is angry with the wicked every day. Psalms 7:11.
 - c. Christ looked round about on them with anger. Mt. 23; Mk. 3:5.
 - d. Paul could be angry at sin. Acts 13:10.
 - e. What is your attitude toward sin?

III. SOME OF THE GREAT IDEAS OF NAHUM ARE: (Several of the thoughts from Jack Lewis's book)

- A. God rules in the kingdom of men.
- B. God is a stronghold in the time of trouble. 1:7.
- C. There are no strongholds secure from the vengeance of God.
- D. "The history of the world is the judgment of the world" (Schiller) "Nations reap what they sow and the wages of sin is death." Nahum is a book of relevance in a world of dictators.

- E. God's patience came to an end with Nineveh and God's longsuffering will come to an end with the world. (2 Pet. 3:9).

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 8
The Minor Prophets - Nahum

1. Explain or define the following expressions about God:

- a. "God is jealous" _____
- b. "The Lord revengeth" _____
- c. "The Lord...is furious" _____
- d. "The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries" _____
- e. "He reserveth wrath for His enemies" _____
- f. "The Lord is slow to anger" _____
- g. "great in power" _____
- h. "Will not at all acquit the wicked" _____
- i. "The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm" _____
- j. "The Lord...is a strong hold in the day of trouble" _____
- k. "He knoweth them that trust in him" _____

2. In verse 12, God assures Judah that what will Assyria not do to her any more? _____

3. What scene do you think Nahum is describing in Nahum 2:3-7? _____

4. How many times does the expression "Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts?" _____

Who is he against? _____

5. Even though the Medes and Babylonians were the ones that actually destroyed Nineveh, it is actually whose judgment? _____

6. What kind of city does Nahum call Nineveh? _____

Why? _____

7. What particular sin did God accuse Nineveh of in 3:4-6? _____

8. What did he say all her stronghold would be like in the day of his wrath? _____

9. How grievous was her wound or sin? _____
10. How valuable will mighty armies, hydrogen bombs, etc. be in the final judgment to ward off God's wrath? _____

TRUE OR FALSE

1. _____ Nahum prophesied to Judah.
2. _____ Even nature is pictured as trembling at God's wrath.
3. _____ God is a sure refuse to all men in the day of his wrath.
4. _____ Nahum pictures a wicked counselor that would arise.
5. _____ Nahum 1:15 pictures a messenger bringing good.
6. _____ Nineveh is today nothing but desolate remains.
7. _____ Nahum 2:9 describes the great wealth of Nineveh.
8. _____ Nations and people always reap what they sow.
9. _____ Put & Lubim were Assyria's helpers.
10. _____ Assyria's shepherds would be asleep in the day of God's wrath.

THOUGHT QUESTION:

1. What is the greatest practical lesson you received from a study of Nahum? _____

The Book of NAHUM

Introduction

Nahum, the Nineveh prophet, is a man with a single message - *the doom and destruction of Nineveh*, capital of Assyria, and (when Nahum wrote) the world's greatest city. It is noteworthy that *two* of the twelve Minor Prophets are devoted entirely to Nineveh. Over a century earlier, Jonah had lifted up his voice pleading Jehovah's cause in the great streets of Nineveh (Jonah 3:4). The Gentile city responded, repented, and the supreme Judge of the universe granted a "stay of execution."

1. But now, one hundred years later, Nahum issues his written warning and predicts the downfall of the once-mighty Nineveh. The Assyrians had soon forgotten their spiritual revival (under Jonah) and returned to their habits of violence, idolatry and arrogance.

a. • They must now learn, through Nahum, that "*Jehovah is a jealous God*" (1:2).
b. • They must now learn that there is a wilful return to wickedness (1:2b). And,
c. • They must now learn that, not only is Jehovah slow to anger and great in power (as announced by the previous prophet), but that "*He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished*" (1:3).

2. Nineveh would be destroyed so completely that no trace of the city would remain - a prophecy fulfilled in painful detail as the ancient city lay obliterated and undiscovered for nearly 2,500 years!

BODY

I. THE NATURE OF NINEVEH AND NAHUM: THE CITY AND THE MAN

A. The Nature of Nineveh: It's Vastness and Vileness. Beyond all doubt, Nineveh is one of the most remarkable cities in history. She was the showcase of the proud Assyrian world. It was 60 miles around her walls - walls that were 100 feet high and so wide that three chariots could be driven abreast. The walls were fortified by 1,500 towers, each 200 feet high. The population was estimated in Jonah's day to be about one million and no doubt even more by Nahum's time.

1. But Nineveh's vastness was eclipsed by her *vileness* (1:14b). The brutality of the Assyrians was such as would make the flesh creep. Their thirst for blood and gore was gruesome. They were cruel. They were violent. They were barbaric.

a. King Assurbanipal (the ruling monarch during Nahum's day) was exceptionally cruel. He boasts of tearing off the lips and limbs of defeated kings and nailing them to the city walls. He brags of compelling a foreign prince to wear around his neck the decapitated head of a Babylonian ruler (whom he queen once feasted in a garden with the head of a tree above them).

2. Nineveh was the proudest and fiercest, as well as the vilest of cities. The surrounding peoples cringed at her feet. She swelled with arrogance in the imagination of her seeming invulnerability. She was intoxicated on pride and drunk on the power of conquest. And...she was at the height of her glory (1:12; 3:16).

a. Thus, Nahum and the poor people of Judah were spectators of all these horrors. They had, for generations, beheld an almost endless succession of Assyrian invasions into their homeland. They appeared to be helpless in the hands of a cruel, tyrannical enemy.

3. With her pride, oppression, idolatry and bloodthirsty behavior she was now operating in open defiance to the sovereign Jehovah. Strangely enough, in a time when the nation showed absolutely no signs of decay, Nahum publishes the irreversible Divine decree of certain doom and destruction.

a. God had had enough!
b. We are reminded of the apostle's statement in Romans 11:22, "Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God" - His goodness through Jonah / His severity through Nahum.

4. Such was Nineveh, the capital city of the most powerful, sensual, ferocious, and diabolically atrocious race of men that perhaps ever existed in all the world. It is little wonder that the prophet concludes his Nineveh...

All who hear about you will clap their hands over you, For on whom has not your evil passed continually? (3:19)

- B. The Nature of Nahum: God's Humble Servant. Of this prophet practically nothing is known. He is simply "Nahum the Elkoshite" (1:1) - a place whose present-day location is uncertain. It is believed by some that he was of Galilee, his name being preserved in the Galilean city of Capernaum, which literally means "Village of Nahum." However, such is only speculation. There is just as much evidence to suggest that he did not come from Galilee (see John 7:52).
1. While little biographical information can be ascertained about Nahum the man - we can know with certainty the time of his work. In 3:8-10 the prophet alludes to the overthrow of No-amon, which was the ancient city of Thebes located next to the Nile in south-central Egypt. We now know, from historical documents, that the Assyrian king, Assurbanipal, overthrew the city in 663 B.C.
 - a. Thus, it was after the fall of Thebes (663 B.C.) and before the fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.) that Nahum composed his prophetic doom-song about Nineveh.
 2. We see in Nahum a principle that is illustrated throughout the sacred scriptures, namely - the power is in God's message and not in God's man! God has never depended on the greatness of man in the exercise and execution of His divine will. Rather, He has chosen insignificant and obscure mortals who would humbly do His will and preach His word.
 - a. Who was David the king but a shepherd boy called to God's service? Who was Amos but a farmer from Tekoa? And Micah, and Habbakkuk and Zephaniah? And... You and I?
 - b. And when our Lord chose those to whom He would entrust the most precious news ever to fall from the lips of man - He chose fishermen, tax collectors and tentmakers. Yes, God's power of salvation would not reside in the men but in the message they spoke (1 Cor. 2:4-5; 3:5-7).
 3. And while there appears an occasional Solomon with talents almost beyond measure, for the greater part God's gospel has been, is, and always will be preached by humble, obscure and insignificant men who love God, His truth and the souls of men (1 Cor. 1:26).
 - a. Such was Nahum - an insignificant man of obscurity, a "nobody" in the eyes of the world, but a "somebody" in the eyes of God.

II. THE LIVING LESSONS OF NAHUM

- A. The Divine Personality. Nahum presents a four-fold picture of the personality of God:
1. A God of Patience, 1:3a. If any city should have been acutely aware of divine patience and longsuffering it was Nineveh. A century earlier God's patience had worn thin with the wicked city, thus, Jonah was sent offering the eleventh hour Jehovah appeal (Jonah 3:4-5, 9-10). Now things had progressed from bad to worse. God's patience had ended. His anger was growing.
 - a. God has always provided man every opportunity to escape destruction (Rom. 2:4-6) & to repent of sin (Reve. 2:21).
 - 1) He was patient with nations - murmuring Israel, sinful Judah, and now Gentile Assyria.
 - 2) He was patient with kings - Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar and the rulers of the divided kingdom.
 - 3) He was patient with ordinary folks like those Jerusalem Jews who crucified His beloved Son...and like Peter and Saul of Tarsus.
 - 4) And...I'm thankful daily that He is patient with me! How about you?
 - b. And why is He so patient? Why does He continue to put up with things that are detestable to Him? Why does He still take and take and take those who blaspheme His very name? And why does He continue to allow this old world full of sin and filth, full of degradation and ungodliness of every sort to go on?
 - 1) The apostle Peter has the simple answer in 2 Peter 3:9.
 2. A God of Power, 1:3a. Man may come to possess great and awesome power but there is no power like Jehovah's power (Psa. 62:11; Reve. 19:1).

- a. The great power of God was manifested in the very beginning when He spoke the worlds into existence (Psa. 33:6,9). His power was seen in a little boat on the Sea of Galilee by a dozen doubting disciples who heard the Master say: "Peace be still!" God's power was seen by the two Mary's who came early on the first day of the week to annoint the body of Jesus and heard the announcement that changed the world - "He is not here, He is risen!" And His power was felt in the first century by a band of saints who were pitted in a fight to the death against the strongest earthly empire that ever existed - an empire whose emperors were dedicated to eradicating the newly-born church of Christ from the face of the earth. It was the little camp of the saints versus the whole Roman world. If such were to stand or fall on natural terms the victor would be certain. But as Paul said in Romans 8:31: "If God is for us, who is against us?" As a result God's power was felt, and today the Lord's church is growing, thriving and spreading while the ancient Roman world lies in dust and ashes (Reve. 20:9).
- b. There is no power like the power of our great God. The truth of that statement would soon be graphically illustrated in the Assyrian capital city.
3. A God of Vengeance, 1:3b. Though God will forgive sin repented of, He will not condone sin persisted in. "God is not mocked," and as Nahum says - there is no way of escaping Him. See also Ex. 34:6-7.
- a. Herein is the key to the book. Compassion can never be exercised at the expense of righteousness. God's love and longsuffering must never be understood as weakness or tolerance toward sin.
- b. With Nineveh - there must be a settling of accounts. See Hebrews 10:30-31. God's vengeance is actual, it is active, it is absolute. Nineveh's time had come (1:6a). The verdict of vengeance had been issued.
4. A God of Good, 1:7. On the other hand, to those who seek Jehovah, He is good (Psa. 100:5; 46:1; 86:4-5). There is no questioning the goodness of Jehovah. Nineveh herself had earlier been an eyewitness to that goodness. He had (by His goodness) given them another chance. They wasted it.
- a. The ultimate statement of God's goodness? John 3:16
- B. The Unchangeable Jehovah. Old-time Nineveh stands as one of God's special object-lessons to rulers and nations of every age. The same God who ruled in Nineveh's day, rules in ours. He is just as compassionate today as He was then. He is equally as caring with Americans as with Assyrians. He is just as forgiving today as then. But people, we need to understand that He is also just as uncompromising toward sin now as He ever was.
- a. God is inflexible when it comes to principles of righteousness, and intolerant when it comes to wickedness - IN EVERY AGE!
- C. God's Sovereign World-Wide Rule. As we make our study through these Hebrew prophets, we must be impressed with the sovereign rule of God over nations and history.
1. The study of history marks the rise and fall of nations. Great ones too - like Assyria and Babylon, like Greece and Rome. These empires ruled the world and predicated their rulership on the theme: "might is right and man's wisdom is supreme." They sought and attained their own glory; they gloried in the arm of flesh; they refused to honor God - they fell!
2. If you know history you know that all of the ancient kingdoms of renown have met their death and doom. That is, all but one!
- a. God's kingdom of spiritual believers in Christ (the Church), which was predicted by the prophets and announced by the apostles, has endured since its beginning on Pentecost and will continue to endure having no end (Dan. 2:44; Matt. 16:18).
- D. The Nineveh Mistake - A Failure To Teach. Here is the important principle of communication to the next generation. Nineveh's revival was short-lived, not because the people involved were insincere in their repentance, but because they failed to pass on their newfound knowledge of God to the succeeding generation. As the years rolled along, Jonah, the "prophet from the sea," and the great God he represented, were largely forgotten. The spiritual revival dwindled and died, and in its place returned all of

the old pagan practices.

1. How can we under estimate the importance of communicating our faith to our offspring? Read Joshua 2:10. Here is a generation who forgot to teach and another who forgot to learn.
 - a. How can we ever take the world for the Lord when we lose our own? God help us not to make the Nineveh mistake with our children.

III. THE OUTLINE

- A. The book of Nahum could have easily been placed in the poetic section. The pace is rapid and excited. The style is forceful, brilliant, and lifelike. One writer remarked -

His language is strong and brilliant; his rhythm rumbles and roars, leaps and flashes, like the horsemen and chariots he describes.

1. The book begins with a description of the attributes of God and then goes into a three chapter discussion of Nineveh's fall.
 - a. Chapter one asserts the certainty of Nineveh's fall.
 - b. Chapter two depicts the capture of the city. And,
 - c. Chapter three tells of the wickedness which provoked her doom.

The Lord Will By No Means Leave The Guilty Unpunished

Chapter 1 ➤ Nineveh's Doom DECLARED

Chapter 2 ➤ Nineveh's Doom DESCRIBED

Chapter 3 ➤ Nineveh's Doom DESERVED - *Three Reasons Why*

1. HITTING THE HIGHLIGHTS

- A. Nineveh's Doom Declared, ch.1. Verses 2-3 present a poetic picture of the wrath of God as it is unleashed upon Assyria. His conduct must harmonize with His character - and it does. He is a merciful God but also a God of justice, and now justice must be served. Verse 6a serves as a summary question: "Who can stand...Who can endure?" Certainly not Nineveh! Certainly not any nation who faces the wrath of God.
1. Verse 8 is interesting. In 614 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon headed a coalition of all the enemies of Assyria. For two years they laid siege to the city of Nineveh. It appeared that the Assyrians might hold out. However, heavy rains came and flooded the Tigris river which in turn swept away a huge section of the city wall. Through this gap the enemy forced their way and captured the city. See 3:13; 2:6.
 - a. Verse 9 - Jehovah would make a "complete end" of Assyria. Distress for God's people would never again arise out of Nineveh.
 2. Verse 11 probably refers to king Sennacherib who attacked Jerusalem in Hezekiah's day. See Isa. 36:1-2a, 14-20; 37:36. Sennacherib insinuated that Jehovah didn't have the power to protect His people. (Boy, was he wrong!)
 3. Verse 14b is the verdict of vengeance. Nineveh would fall and Judah would be blessed by the news. (vs.15).
 - a. In verse 15b Nahum challenges God's people to remain faithful to God's covenant. No doubt, during the days of the Sennacherib invasion they had made vows to God, that if He would deliver them out of their distress, they would perform greater service. Now Nahum reminds them to perform that which they had promised.
 - 1) Is there a lesson there for us?
- B. Nineveh's Doom Described, ch.2. Here is a prophetic preview of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion (vs.1). Verse 3-4 describe the terrors of the invading enemy. Their shields drip red with Assyrian blood. The soldiers themselves are drenched scarlet with the blood of battle. As the chariots approached the city, their charge was so swift that

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- a. In which group do you belong?

HABAKKUK:

“Let all the earth keep silence” (Habakkuk 2: 20) - Lessons from a Holy God

Patrick Swayne

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had a moment in your life where you found yourself suffering for something out of your control? Did you feel as though God was at fault? When I first made the decision to come to Australia as a missionary, I always assumed that raising support would be my challenge. Never once did it occur to me that I might meet the meagre total that I had set as my minimum support goal and find that my real difficulty would be in receiving permission from the Australian government to come. Yet in October 2007, I found that my support was in place, but my working visa was not.

What followed for me was seven of the most stressful months I have ever experienced in my life. I had told myself I would never “move back in with my parents” – I was forced to live with my mother. I had told myself after preaching school I would always be involved in full time preaching – I found myself working a night job in a warehouse to support myself. I even tried to volunteer my services at places as far away as four hours by car and still could find nowhere to preach regularly. My pride was battered; my life was in limbo. Every week a supporter emailed, asking, “Has the work visa come yet? When is it going to come?” I had no answer but, “No,” and “I don’t know.” Every Sunday and Wednesday I faced a dear brother or sister – often several – asking, “So, when are you going to Australia?” As time wore on, I began to think never.

I had felt that Australia was my “Macedonian call.” I had felt that leaving my work as a full time preacher (which was going well) in the preacher rich state of Tennessee and going to the mission field was the morally right thing to do. I had seen God’s hand in it all. I was prepared to sacrifice; I was prepared to work; I was prepared to go. I was not prepared to wait, which is what God wanted me to do. Unfortunately, instead of seeing this as a part of God’s plan, I felt angry at God for leading me down what I felt was a dead end path. I felt betrayed and cheated.

A man named Habakkuk once felt the same.

HABAKKUK’S SITUATION

Digging through the Bible, you will never find a mention of Habakkuk outside of the book that bears his name – in fact, even in that book you will only find his name twice. In the context of a covenant that generally is very quick to point out who someone was the son of and where a person was from, Habakkuk stands out in that he doesn’t stand out. Habakkuk is clearly a faithful follower of God, and definitely a prophet (Habakkuk 1:1), but beyond that nothing is known. His name means, “to embrace,” or “ardent embracer.”

As the text quickly transitions from Habakkuk’s introduction to Habakkuk’s description of his situation, it almost seems as though Habakkuk could not wait to get into the meat of his message. His prophecy begins with a cry to the Lord that looks as though it has been ripped out of one of the Psalms: “O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear!

Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!" (1:2). Habakkuk has a complaint against Jehovah God that he makes clear from the onset – God is not responding quickly enough to what the prophet and his people are suffering.

In regards to the situation Habakkuk faced, Habakkuk himself speaks in very general terms. It's not clear whether he has suffered anything or he is simply observing the suffering of others. He says, "Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention" (1:3). Habakkuk, as a righteous man, seems to be concerned with what all righteous men are suffering. He sees that the trend of society is moving against righteousness and has even resulted in the suffering of many righteous people; he is fearful for what the future beholds.

The lack of biographical information and the relative ambiguity of Habakkuk's description of his situation speak volumes as to why God might have placed this in our Bibles. Yes, due to the mentioning of the Chaldeans later as an up and coming power in the world, we are able to place the book into a historical context – it took place prior to the Babylonian captivity and was written to comfort the Jews living in that time. However, it's my opinion that these historical and biographical details were kept to a minimum so that it would be easier for future audiences to identify with the book.

Habakkuk's situation has been my situation; I am sure it has been yours as well. Habakkuk was doing all he could to serve God personally and encourage others to do so, but forces outside of his power were conspiring against him and seemed to be gaining the upper hand. No change was in sight. Is it all that different when we consider what is happening to marriage in western society? When we consider the degeneration of the media? When we consider the rise of militant Islam? When we consider a host of other societal issues, not to mention our own personal struggles and difficulties?

What can the righteous do when things beyond their power are not going their way? Certainly Habakkuk is appealing to the right source – God – but his appeal is full of fear and frustration rather than faith. Rather than asking the Lord to act, he accuses the Lord of wilful inactivity – "thou wilt not hear... thou wilt not save" (v. 2). The situation must be terrible, but can it really be as bad as Habakkuk envisions – "judgment doth **never** go forth?"

While God is mindful of the tears of the righteous and while His ears are always open to their prayers (Psalm 56:8; 1 Peter 3:12), sometimes He calls us to wipe our tears away and open up our eyes. Before Habakkuk can continue pleading, God interrupts him to reveal the first part of His solution.

GOD'S SOLUTION, PART 1

God receives no introduction by Habakkuk, and a cursory reading of the first chapter might confuse anyone not familiar with the set up of the book. The book plays out like this - Habakkuk talks (Habakkuk 1:1-4) and God interrupts; God talks (1:5-11) and Habakkuk interrupts; Habakkuk talks (1:12-2:1) and finally waits for God to answer; God answers (2:2-20) and Habakkuk responds with a song of prayerful praise (3:1-19). There's a reason for this layout, particularly for the lack of an introduction for God in the first chapter – the book is like a conversation with God. Habakkuk is in the midst of heartfelt prayer to God when he receives this "burden" (1:1) or "vision" (2:2) in which God speaks directly to him.

Try to imagine yourself in Habakkuk's position. You're suffering due to circumstances beyond your control and you're pleading to God to do something about it, and all of a sudden God says, "I'm going to do something that's going to shock you – you won't believe it! I'm going to allow your country to be overtaken by the Chaldeans. You know – that terrible Gentile nation in the west!" That's essentially God's solution, or at least the first part of it; what's worse, God actually describes the terrible Gentile nation that he's using to overtake his country, as if Habakkuk had not heard of them.

Habakkuk had complained of violence; God tells him that the Chaldeans would come "all for violence" (1:2-3, 9). Habakkuk had complained of spoiling; God tells him that the Chaldeans would come "to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs" (v. 3, 6). Habakkuk complained of wicked people surrounding him; God tells him that the horsemen of the Chaldeans would spread themselves through his land (v. 4, 8). Habakkuk complained of wrong judgment; the judgment of the Chaldeans proceeded from themselves and was whatever they desired (v. 4, 7).

This seems more like a cruel joke than a response from a loving God to a penitent believer. How could God respond to Habakkuk's problems by giving him worse problems, problems that he couldn't have imagined even if he tried? Habakkuk must have been flabbergasted, and he lets God know as much.

HABAKKUK'S SUGGESTIONS

If you were in Habakkuk's shoes, you might have responded as he did – utter denial. "No way, God! You've got it wrong. You wouldn't do something like this – you couldn't!" As I read through this section, I am reminded of when Peter received the commandment from the Lord, "Rise Peter, kill and eat," and Peter responded, "Not so Lord" (Acts 10:9-16). The text says this happened three times, but should it have happened at all? What Peter, Habakkuk and men of every age need to realise is that **if He is the Lord, it is so and should be so**, regardless of what anyone says!

Habakkuk knew it was the Lord that spoke and yet still thought he knew better. First, no way Israel could be overthrown – maybe chastened a bit, but, in Habakkuk words, "we shall not die" (Habakkuk 1:12). Second, no way God could use someone so wicked to accomplish His ends – how could He stand to even look at the Chaldeans (v. 13)? Third, no way God could let a dog like Chaldea off the leash. If the Babylonians were given a fishing license in the sea of the nations, they wouldn't stop until all the fish were in their boat and the lake was empty, and they still wouldn't acknowledge God (v. 13-17). Basically, Habakkuk's statements can be boiled down to one: this plan isn't right God – you need to pick another one.

Habakkuk had succumbed to a spirit of suggestion rather than summoning the spirit of a supplicant. There is a fine line between the two. Supplication – a humble request for help from someone in authority, in this case, God – is expected and even commanded of the faithful as a part of their prayer relationship with God (1 Timothy 2:1). God desires that we go to Him with our needs and concerns even though He knows our needs (Matthew 6:8-13; 1 Peter 5:7). Suggestion however is neither commanded nor acceptable. Suggestion is where individuals go to God in prayer without this core value in their hearts: "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). Instead, they feel that they know what is best and will hold God accountable to performing their will, not His.