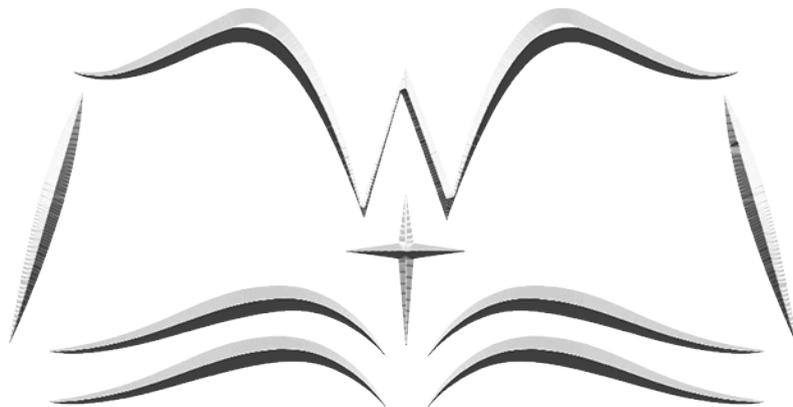


A CORONICAL STUDY OF 11 OF THE 12 MINOR PROPHETS

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"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Introduction to The Minor Prophets

INTRODUCTION

1. While Christians are not under the Old Testament as a system of justification, the OT is of great value for us today...
 - a. Written for our learning, it is a source of comfort and hope - Ro 15:4
 - b. Written for our admonition, we learn what mistakes to avoid - 1 Co 10:11
 - c. As with all scripture inspired of God, it is profitable "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" - cf. 2 Ti 3:14-17
2. This is especially true with regard to "The Minor Prophets"...
 - a. A collection of twelve books that make up the last part of the Old Testament
 - b. Beginning with Hosea, and ending with Malachi
3. Those willing to study these books will find their lives enriched as they increase...
 - a. Their knowledge of God's holiness, righteousness, justice and mercy
 - b. Their understanding of God's dealings in the nations of men
 - c. Their appreciation of the Bible as a literary masterpiece

[With this lesson, we begin a series of studies in which we will survey "The Minor Prophets". Before we examine our first book, some introductory material may prove helpful...]

I. WHO WERE THE PROPHETS?

A. THE OLD COVENANT HAD DIFFERENT KINDS OF INSTRUCTORS...

1. There was Moses, the lawgiver - Neh 8:1; Neh 8:14; Neh 9:13-14; Jn 1:17; Jn 7:19
2. There were the priests, administrators of the law - Lev 10:8-11; Hos 4:6; Eze 22:26; Mal 2:7
3. There were the wise men, who gave counsel - 2 Sam 14:1-24; 2 Sam 20:16-22
4. There were the psalmists, poets who were the "sweet singers" of Israel - cf. 2 Sam 23:1; 1 Chr 6:33
5. There were the prophets, communicators of the Word of God

B. A "PROPHET" WAS A SPOKESMAN FOR ANOTHER...

1. Like Aaron was for his brother Moses - Exo 4:16; Ex 7:1
2. The word literally means "to boil up like a fountain"
3. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a prophet...
 - a. Was a spokesman for God - 2 Pe 1:21
 - b. Was given something to say, and had to say it! - Jer 20:7-9
4. A prophet was primarily a "forth-teller", though sometimes a "fore-teller"
 - a. God's word often pertained to future events
 - b. The fulfilled prophecies of these prophets are therefore a strong proof of inspiration
-- But much of their word concerned not the future, but current events

C. OTHER DESIGNATIONS HELP TO DEFINE THE ROLE OF A PROPHET...

1. Early in Israel's history they were called "seers" - 1 Sam 9:9
2. Another appellation was "man of God" - 1 Sam 9:6; 1 Kings 17:18

3. Also known as a "servant of God" - 1 Kings 18:36; 1 Chr 6:49
4. They served as God's "messenger" - Dan 4:13; Hag 1:13
5. They were also assigned the role of "watchman" - Eze 3:17; Eza 33:7

[The prophets were therefore servants of God, divinely appointed and inspired to proclaim His Word. At times, they were messengers of God's word as it applied to the present, serving as watchmen of the people of God; other times, God's message pertained to the future, and as such they were "seers" of things to come.]

II. HOW ARE THE PROPHETS CLASSIFIED?

A. IT IS COMMON TO SPEAK OF "ORAL" AND "LITERARY" PROPHETS...

1. The "oral" prophets are those who left no writings bearing their names
 - a. Such as Elijah and Elisha - cf. 1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 2
 - b. Many others, including Nathan 2 Sam 12, Gad 2 Sam 24:11, and Ahijah 1 Kings 11:29
2. Those who left books bearing their names are called the "literary" prophets

B. THE LITERARY PROPHETS ARE CATEGORIZED AS "MAJOR" AND "MINOR" PROPHETS...

1. Augustine is credited with being the first to classify them in this way
2. The distinction pertains only to the length of the books
 - a. The "major prophets" include the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel
 - b. The "minor prophets" are those twelve books from Hosea to Malachi

[As we consider the works of the "literary" prophets, we should note that the order of the books in our Bibles is not chronological. Therefore it may serve useful to review...]

III. THE LITERARY PROPHETS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Please note: Dating the prophets is not without controversy, and with some it can be very difficult. What we provide below are the estimates among many conservative scholars. While the specific year may not be known the estimates are within a decade or two. But more importantly, the messages remain the same throughout the ages.

A. NINTH CENTURY (EARLY ASSYRIAN PERIOD)

1. Obadiah (ca. 845 B.C.)
2. Joel (ca 830 B.C.)
3. Jonah (790-750 B.C.)
 - This is during the period of "The Divided Kingdom" in Israel's history; to the north and east the empire of Assyria was beginning to make its presence known in Israel

B. EIGHTH CENTURY (ASSYRIAN PERIOD)

1. Amos (755 B.C.)
2. Hosea (750-725 B.C.)
3. Isaiah (740-700 B.C.)
4. Micah (735-700 B.C.)
 - In 722 B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel was taken into Assyrian captivity; these prophets were proclaiming God's message as the nation was being threatened from the north

C. SEVENTH CENTURY (CHALDEAN PERIOD)

1. Jeremiah (626-586 B.C.)
2. Zephaniah (630-625 B.C.)
3. Nahum (625-612 B.C.)
4. Habakkuk (625-605 B.C.)

-- Assyria was eventually defeated by Babylon; these prophets served as God's messengers when the Babylonian empire threatened the kingdom of Judah

D. SIXTH CENTURY (THE EXILE)

1. Ezekiel (593-570 B.C.)
2. Daniel (605-536 B.C.)

-- Like many of their countrymen, these prophets were taken into Babylonian captivity; from Babylon they served as God's messengers to both captives and kings

E. SIXTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES (POST-EXILIC PERIOD)

1. Haggai (520 B.C.)
2. Zechariah (520-518 B.C.)
3. Malachi (ca. 440 B.C.)

-- After the Jews were allowed to return home from Babylonian captivity, God used Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people to rebuild the temple; later, Malachi was used to reform the priesthood during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah

[Finally, here are some thoughts on...]

IV. UNDERSTANDING THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHETS

A. THREE THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND AS YOU STUDY THE PROPHETS...

1. Seek to understand the political, social and religious conditions of the times
 - a. Any interpretation must consider how the message was relevant for the people to whom the prophet spoke
 - b. Secondary fulfillment of prophecy is often found in the NT, but this can be understood only when applied by inspired writers of the NT
 - c. Guard against making interpretations that are purely speculative
 - d. Any application to modern events must be carefully harmonized in light of the NT
2. Consider God's relation to the heathen nations (i.e., other than Israel and Judah)
 - a. The prophets often revealed how God directed their destiny and judged them
 - b. The New Testament reveals that Christ rules the nations today! - Mt 28:18; Re 1:5
3. Notice any teaching regarding the Messiah and His coming kingdom - Acts 26:6-7; Acts 28:23
 - a. The immediate mission of most prophets was to save God's people from idolatry and wickedness
 - b. Failing that, they were sent to announce God's judgment and the coming destruction of the nation
 - c. But many prophets left a message of hope for the future, regarding the Messiah who would come and establish a kingdom that could never be destroyed!

B. SOME OF THE GREAT THEMES DEVELOPED BY THE PROPHETS...

1. The holiness of God - He is absolutely pure, righteous, just, merciful, tender, loving, and longsuffering
2. The sovereignty of God - He rules the universe and is above all

3. The immutability of God's word
 - a. He carries out His promises
 - b. One can depend upon Him to act consistently with His Word
4. The terribleness of sin
 - a. God abhors iniquity, and will not tolerate, overlook, nor excuse it
 - b. But He is willing to forgive those who humbly repent
5. Repentance and righteousness
 - a. This is the clarion call of the prophets
 - b. Though severe is God's punishment of the wicked, yet God's mercy is great in loving kindness upon the righteous who are of broken spirit and contrite heart
6. The worship due God - The proper reverence, awe, and respect for God will cause one to praise Him and give thanks for His wonderful grace and mercy!

CONCLUSION

1. Why study "The Minor Prophets"?
 - a. This is a question asked by many sincere students of the Bible.
 - b. Some do not see the value for Christians to study this portion of the Old Testament
 - c. Yet later they realize there is much to learn from this portion of God's Word.
2. Why study "The Minor Prophets"? Because in them we learn about...
 - a. The nature of God, His holiness, justice, righteousness and mercy
 - b. The workings of God, as He dealt with nations, bringing judgment upon the guilty
...which can help us in our relationship with God today, giving us comfort and hope to face the future, knowing that God is in ultimate control!

We hope this brief introduction has whet your appetite to study "The Minor Prophets". Our next lesson will begin the study in earnest with a look at the book of Obadiah...

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Obadiah - The Judgment Of Edom (Obadiah 1:1-21)

INTRODUCTION

1. The first of the "The Minor Prophets" we shall consider is Obadiah, whose book is the shortest of all books in the Old Testament
 2. His name means "Servant of Yahweh (Jehovah)", which was quite common...
 - a. Thirteen different people are called by this name in the Old Testament
 - b. One Jewish tradition identifies him as the one who was Ahab's steward
 - 1) Who hid 100 prophets from Jezebel, Ahab's wife - 1 Kings 18:3-4
 - 2) Who feared the Lord from his youth - 1 Kings 18:12
 - c. He may have also been...
 - 1) The Obadiah sent by Jehoshaphat to teach the law in Judah - 2 Chr 17:7
 - 2) The Obadiah who was one of the overseers in repairing the temple under Josiah - 2 Chr 34:12
- Whoever this Obadiah was, his message contains valuable lessons for us today

[Before looking at the book itself, let's consider some...]

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. THE DATE...

1. Two dates are often proposed: 845 B.C. and 586 B.C.
 2. The prophet refers to an attack on Jerusalem; commentators offer these two possibilities:
 - a. The days of Jehoram (848-844 B.C.), when Philistines and Arabians attacked the city - 2 Chr 21:8-10; 2 Chr 21:16-17
 - b. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (586 B.C.)
 3. The internal evidence appears to support the early date of 845 B.C. (Keil, Hailey)
 - a. The language of Obadiah is much different from Jeremiah
 - b. There is no mention of the destruction of the temple, the deportation to Babylon, the remnant who went to Egypt
- We accept the early date, that it was around 845 B.C.

B. THE MESSAGE...

1. The fall of Edom
 - a. Because of its pride
 - b. And its cruelty against Israel, their cousins
 2. The exaltation of Zion
 - a. When Seir, the Edomite counterpart of Zion, will be cast down
 - b. The rescued of Israel will be in Zion, for in it the redeemed shall be found
- For this reason we have subtitled this lesson as "The Judgment Of Edom"

C. THE HISTORY OF EDOM...

1. The people of Edom descended from Esau, Jacob's twin brother
2. There was sibling rivalry between Edom and Israel, found first in Esau and Jacob

- a. The twins struggled in their mother's womb - Gen 25:22-26
- b. Esau sold his birthright to Jacob - Gen 25:27-34
- c. Jacob stole Esau's blessing as the firstborn - Gen 27:1-46
- 3. While Jacob and Esau eventually reconciled Gen., chapters 32 & 33, their descendants were often at odds with one another
 - a. In the Exodus, Edom refused Israel passage through their land - Num 20:14-21
 - b. Edom was finally subjected by David - 2 Sam 8:13-14
 - c. During the reign of Jehoram, Edom revolted - 2 Kings 8:20-22
- 4. Located south of the Dead Sea, they built their cities in the cliffs and thought themselves impregnable
- 5. After the prophecy of Obadiah...
 - a. The Edomites were overcome by the Nabataeans and forced to settle south of Judah
 - b. Around 100 B.C., they were conquered by John Hyrcanus of the Maccabees
 - 1) Who forced many of them to be circumcised and accept the Law
 - 2) As such, many became nominal Jewish proselytes (Herod the Great was one)
 - c. By 100 A.D., Edom as a race and nation had become lost to history

[With this background, let's now read through the prophecy of Obadiah, with the aid of the following...]

II. OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

- A. THE COMING JUDGMENT ON EDOM Oba 1:1-9
 - 1. The decree has gone forth to the nations Oba 1:1
 - 2. Deceived by pride in her location, Edom will be brought down Oba 1:2-4
 - 3. Destruction will be complete Oba 1:5-6
 - 4. Edom will be betrayed by allies Oba 1:7
 - 5. Not even wisdom and might can save them Oba 1:8-9
- B. THE REASON FOR JUDGMENT ON EDOM Oba 1:10-16
 - 1. For violence and unbrotherly conduct toward Jacob Oba 1:10-11
 - 2. A rebuke against such conduct Oba 1:12-14
 - 3. Therefore the "Day of the Lord" for them will mean receiving the same sort of treatment! Oba 1:15-16
- C. THE EXALTATION OF ISRAEL OVER EDOM Oba 1:17-21
 - 1. Deliverance and holiness will be found on Mt. Zion, not Mt. Seir (the prominent mountain in Edom)! verse 17a
 - 2. The house of Jacob shall consume the house of Esau Oba 1:17b-18
 - 3. The children of Israel will possess Edom and surrounding nations Oba 1:19-20
 - 4. The ultimate rule will be that of the Lord's Oba 1:21

[With this brief perusal of Obadiah's "vision" concerning Edom Oba 1:1, here are some thoughts regarding...]

III. THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PROPHECY

- A. ITS IMMEDIATE FULFILLMENT...
 - 1. Edom's destruction began with the Babylonian invasion under Nebuchadnezzar (ca. 600 B.C.)

2. It continued into the fourth century B.C. with the invasion of the Arabs known as the Nabataeans, forcing them to a region south of Judah
3. In the second century B.C., the Maccabees brought them under subjection when Judas Maccabeus slew twenty thousand of them
4. John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.) forced the remnant to accept circumcision and the Law

B. ITS ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT...

1. May likely have been with the coming of the Messiah (Jesus Christ)
2. For with His coming, and the establishment of the spiritual kingdom beginning in Jerusalem...
 - a. Deliverance and holiness did come from Mt. Zion (i.e. Jerusalem)! - Lk 24:47
 - b. The kingdom (rule) is the Lord's - cf. Lk 1:31-34; Mt 28:18; 1 Pe 3:22; Re 1:5
 - c. The house of Jacob (i.e., the true spiritual Israel) did possess Edom as the Gentiles among them became Christians!
 - cf. Ro 11:13-18 (where faithful Gentiles are spoken as being grafted into the stock of Israel)
3. As support for this interpretation, consider:
 - a. The prophecy of Balaam - Num 24:15-19
 - 1) Which foretells how "A Star shall come out of Jacob, A Scepter shall rise out of Israel" (the Messiah?)
 - 2) And how Edom will become a possession
 - b. The prophecy of Amos - Amos 9:11-12
 - c. The application by James at the council in Jerusalem - Ac 15:13-17
 - 1) Who understood the conversion of the Gentiles to be a fulfillment of Amos
 - 2) Therefore the fulfillment is figurative, not literal, as Gentiles become Christians

[Finally, a few thoughts about some...]

IV. LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

- A. "PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION..." - Pro 16:18
 1. Pride leads to vanity and a sense of independence from God
 2. Just as Edom took pride in their geographical location, allies, wisdom and might
 3. Such arrogance God will punish - cf. Isa 13:9-11

-- Are we on guard against such pride?
- B. DO NOT MISTREAT YOUR BRETHREN...
 1. This was Edom's guilt also Oba 1:10
 2. How we treat our brethren affects our relationship with the Lord - cf. 1 Co 8:12

-- Are we careful about our dealings with our brethren?
- C. "DO NOT REJOICE WHEN YOUR ENEMY FALLS..." - Pro 24:17-18
 1. This Edom did when Judah was plundered Oba 1:12
 2. This sort of gloating is displeasing to God!

-- Do we rejoice when our enemy falls?
- D. IN TIME OF DIVINE JUDGMENT, GOD PROVIDES A MEANS AND PLACE OF ESCAPE FOR THOSE WHO TURN TO HIM...
 1. Note again verse 17, where Mount Zion would become a place of deliverance
 2. Today, spiritual Mount Zion is a place to which we can turn - cf. He 12:22-24

3. It is a place where we can find:
 - a. "the city of the living God"
 - b. "the heavenly Jerusalem"
 - c. "an innumerable company of angels"
 - d. "the firstborn registered in heaven"
 - e. "God the Judge of all"
 - f. "the spirits of just men made perfect"
 - g. "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant"
 - h. "the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel"
- Of course, this is what we come to as we obey the gospel of Christ!

CONCLUSION

1. With this brief look at "The Book Of Obadiah", we have seen that...
 - a. The prophets were not limited in their prophecies to just the nation of Israel
 - b. God held the heathen nations accountable for their actions
 - c. While it was written primarily to comfort the Israelites in Obadiah's day, there are lessons to be gleaned for us as well
 - d. The message of hope may have had its ultimate fulfillment in what we can enjoy ourselves today, in the person and work of Jesus!
2. In verse 15, we find the expression "the day of the Lord"...
 - a. An expression often used by the prophets referring to God's judgment upon the nations
 - b. The particular "day of the Lord" of which Obadiah wrote was "near", and was fulfilled with the destruction of Edom
 - c. But there is another "day of the Lord" yet to come!
 - 1) Of which God's judgments upon the nations were only a shadow, a type
 - 2) Peter writes of that day, in which the whole world will be judged - 2 Pe 3:7-13

Are we ready for that "day of the Lord"? Or do we in our arrogance take pride in our wisdom, might, or position in life? If so, "the pride of your heart has deceived you" Obadiah 1:3.
How much better to humbly recognize that...

"...on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness;" Oba 1:17)

Have you come to Mount Zion, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant?

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Joel - The Day Of The Lord (Joel 1:1 to 2:27)

INTRODUCTION

1. We now turn to the book of Joel, and this will be the first of two lessons
2. The name "Joel" means "Jehovah is God", and we know very little about the author
 - a. The name appears frequently, with at least a dozen men sharing the name in the O.T.
 - b. Described as "the son of Pethuel" (Joel 1:1), there is no reason to associate him with any other Joel mentioned in the Bible

[As we begin our study, let's do so with some]

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. THE DATE

1. The date of the book is uncertain
 - a. Some place it as one of the earliest of the "literary prophets" (ca. 900 B.C.)
 - b. Some believe it was written after the Exile (ca. 400 B.C.)
2. Hailey, Young, and other scholars defend the early date
 - a. Suggesting a date of 830 B.C.
 - b. There are other scholars who defend a later date.

B. THE OCCASION

1. Joel's prophecy was occasioned by a calamity that had struck the land
 - a. Literally, it is described as a locust plague
 - b. Some suggest that the locusts were symbolical of an army that had invaded
2. We take the description of the plague as literal

C. THE MESSAGE

1. Joel sees the locust plague as a warning from God
 - a. That the calamity was heralding "the day of the Lord" which was coming
 - b. That if the people did not repent, this "day" would bring even more destruction
2. So Joel's message is "Seek the Lord through repentance!" in the first two chapters: (Joel 1:1-20; Joel 2:1-27)
3. Joel also has some things to say about what shall come to pass "afterward" (Joel 2:28-32 to Joel 3:1-21)

[With this brief background as an introduction, let's now begin reading the book with the aid of the following outline]

II. OUTLINE OF THE BOOK (Joel 1:1 to 2:27)

A. THE LAND IS LAID WASTE (Joel 1:1-12)

1. Joel provides a graphic description of the locust plague (Joel 1:1-4)
2. He calls for people to weep over the devastation (Joel 1:5-12)

- B. A PLEA TO CRY OUT TO THE LORD (Joel 1:13-20)
1. To be led by the priests, consecrating a fast and calling the people together (Joel 1:13-14)
 2. For the present destruction is heralding the coming "day of the Lord" (Joel 1:15-18)
 3. Joel and the beasts take the lead, with their own cry to the Lord (Joel 1:19-20)

- C. THE COMING "DAY OF THE LORD" (Joel 2:1-11)
1. A cry to warn the people, for the day is coming! (Joel 2:1)
 2. This particular "day of the Lord" is vividly described (Joel 2:2-11)
 - a. It will be a recurrence of the locust plague
 - b. Described as an invading army, an army led by God!

- D. A CALL TO REPENTANCE (Joel 2:12-17)
1. Voiced first by God Himself (Joel 2:12)
 2. Then elaborated upon by Joel (Joel 2:13-17)
 - a. Repent, for God Who is gracious may relent and provide a blessing
 - b. Make it a national repentance, led by the priests

- E. THE LORD'S PROMISE IF THERE IS REPENTANCE (Joel 2:18-20)
1. He will be zealous for His land, and show pity to the people (Joel 2:18)
 2. He will bless them with grain, wine, and oil (Joel 2:19)
 3. He will remove the "army" (locusts) from the north (Joel 2:20)

- F. A CALL TO COURAGE AND GLADNESS (Joel 2:21-24)
1. A call directed by Joel towards:
 - a. The land, for the Lord has done marvelous things (Joel 2:21)
 - b. The beasts of the field, for the pastures and trees are fruitful once again (Joel 2:22)
 - c. The children of Zion, for the Lord is blessing the land with rain and a full harvest (Joel 2:23-24)
 2. This passage implies the people repented, and the Lord was keeping His promise!

- G. THE LORD'S REASSURANCE (Joel 2:25-27)
1. God will restore what His "army" (the locusts) had destroyed (Joel 2:25)
 2. They will be blessed with plenty, and praise God for His grace (Joel 2:26)
 3. Then they shall truly know that God is over them (Joel 2:27)

[This ends the first part of Joel's prophecy. It clearly pertained to the people of his day. The rest of the book looks forward to a period described as "afterward" (Joel 2:28), "in those days and at that time" (Joel 3:1), and "in that day" (Joel 3:18). This section we will examine in our next lesson.

But from what we have read thus far, what lessons can we learn from Joel?]

III. LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF JOEL

- A. THE VALUE OF NATURAL CALAMITIES
1. They can serve to turn men back to God
 2. God certainly used them to reach out to His people in the O.T. - cf. Amos 4:6-12
 3. But not all calamities come from God; some came from Satan - cf. Job 1:6-19

4. Whether calamities come from God, Satan, or are purely coincidental, they should be times of reflection concerning life and our relationship to God - e.g., Job 1:20-22

B. THE NATURE OF TRUE REPENTANCE (Joel 2:12-13a)

1. It must be with all our heart (Joel 2:12a)
2. It must be inward, not just outward (Joel 2:12b-13a)

C. THE NATURE OF GOD (Joel 2:13b)

1. He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness - cf. Psa 103:8-14
2. He relents from doing harm when we repent - cf. Jer 18:7-8

D. "THE DAY OF THE LORD" CAN BE AVERTED

1. "The day of the Lord" often refers to God's judgment upon a nation
 - a. Such judgments were many, and often described in terms indicative of the final judgment at the end of time - cf. the judgment of Babylon, Isa 13:1-13
 - b. In the first part of Joel's prophecy, it referred to a plague of locusts that would be greater than what they had already experienced - Joel 2:1-11
2. But such judgments could be averted - cf. Jer 18:7-8
 - a. Such happened with the city of Nineveh - cf. Jonah 3:1-10
 - b. And when we read Joel 1:11; Joel 2:1; Joel 2:11 and compare it with Joel 2:13-14; Joel 1:18-23, it appears to have been averted in Joel's day!
3. Of course, this does not pertain to the "ultimate" day of the Lord at the end of time, but to the "preliminary" judgments that God often brings upon a nation

CONCLUSION

1. Our next lesson will complete our survey of the book of Joel, in which we will find
 - a. Joel writing of events that heralded the beginning of the Christian dispensation
 - b. More lessons that are of value to the Christian
2. But in closing, may I remind you of that "day of the Lord" which is yet to come?
 - a. A day vividly described in 2 Pe 3:7-10
 - b. A day which cannot be averted, but for which we can prepare - 2 Pe 3:11-14

For those who prepare themselves for this coming "day of the Lord", they will find that indeed the Lord is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (Joel 2:13). But for those who continue in their sins, we can only say along with Joel

"Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; It shall come as destruction from the Almighty."
(Joel 1:15)

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Joel - The Day Of The Lord (Joel 2:28 to 3:21)

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous lesson on Joel, we saw that
 - a. Joel's prophecy was occasioned by a plague of locusts - Joel 1:2-4
 - b. He proclaimed the plague as a warning from God - Joel 1:15-16
 - 1) If the people would not repent, "the day of the Lord" would come and bring greater destruction - Joel 2:1-5
 - 2) If they did repent, then material blessings would follow - Joel 2:12-14
 - c. Joel therefore called for a national repentance - Joel 2:15-17a
 - d. Evidently his work was effective, for he describes the blessings that had come - Joel 2:21-27
2. We also noticed some lessons to be learned from the book
 - a. The value of natural calamities (can serve to turn men to God)
 - b. The nature of true repentance - Joel 2:12-13
 - c. The character of the Lord - Joel 2:13b
 - d. "The day of the Lord", when referring to God's judgment on a city or nation, can be averted - cf. also Jer 18:7-8; Jonah 3:1-10
3. In this lesson, we shall complete our survey of Joel by reading Joel 2:28 thru 3:21
 - a. With attention to the prophetic element of this passage
 - b. Offering comments concerning its interpretation

[Let's begin with a careful reading of this passage]

I. JOEL'S PROPHECY OF THE FUTURE

- A. WHAT SHALL COME TO PASS "AFTERWARD" (Joel 2:26-32)
 1. God's Spirit will be poured out on all flesh - Joel 2:28-29
 2. Wonders in heaven and earth to appear before the coming of "the day of the Lord" - Joel 2:30-31
 3. There shall be deliverance in Mount Zion and Jerusalem - Joel 2:32
- B. WHAT SHALL OCCUR "IN THOSE DAYS" (Joel 3:1-17)
 1. God will judge all nations on account of His people - Joel 3:1-3
 2. Specifically mentioned are Tyre, Sidon and Philistia - Joel 3:4-8
 - a. Who had mistreated God's people
 - b. Who shall be treated as they treated others
 3. The nations are called to do battle - Joel 3:9-12
 - a. "Prepare for war!"
 - b. Come to the "Valley of Jehoshaphat", where the Lord will judge the nations
 - 1) Jehoshaphat means "God shall judge"
 - 2) The valley referred to may be the Kidron near Jerusalem
 4. The outcome - Joel 3:13-17
 - a. There will be a great harvest
 - b. "The day of the Lord" is described

- 1) As near in this "valley of decision"
- 2) In which the heavenly bodies are diminished and shaken
- c. While God's people find shelter and strength in Him
- d. The Lord will be known and dwell in Zion, Jerusalem forever remaining holy

C. WHAT SHALL COME TO PASS "IN THAT DAY" (Joel 3:18-21)

1. Judah shall be blessed by a "fountain from the house of the Lord" - Joel 3:18
2. Egypt and Edom will be desolate because of their violence - Joel 3:19
3. Judah and Jerusalem shall abide forever, acquitted of their guilt - Joel 3:20-21

[Such is the prophetic message of Joel. What he SAYS is clear enough. What he MEANS is something else! Here are a few thoughts on]

II. INTERPRETING JOEL'S PROPHECY

A. THERE ARE THREE KEY PHRASES

1. "it shall come to pass afterward" - Joel 2:28
 - a. This period of time is clearly defined by Peter in Ac 2:14-21
 - b. In which he applies it to the events on the Day of Pentecost
2. "in those days and at that time" - Joel 3:1
 - a. The same period of time as described in Joel 2:28-32
 - b. I.e., at some point during the Messianic age
3. "in that day" - Joel 3:18
 - a. The context places this AFTER "the day of the Lord"
 - b. I.e., at some point during the Messianic age, but not until AFTER the judgment of the nations in the "Valley of Jehoshaphat"

B. DETERMINING THE TIME AND EVENTS

1. Certainly Joel 2:28-29 refers to a period beginning with the events described in Acts 2
 - a. Peter said "this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" - Ac 2:16
 - b. An inspired statement pinpointing when this prophecy began to be fulfilled
 2. However, there are different opinions regarding Joel 2:30-3:21
 - a. "The day of the Lord" in Joel 2:30-31 is variously interpreted as:
 - 1) The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD
 - 2) The final coming of the Lord
 - b. The judgment in the "valley of Jehoshaphat" in Joel 3:1-17 is variously interpreted as:
 - 1) Figurative, by some; literal, by others
 - 2) Referring to no specific judgment, by some
 - 3) Referring to a specific judgment at some time, by others
 - 1) E.g., after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD
 - 2) E.g., The "Battle of Armageddon" prior to the "millennium" - Re 16:14-16
 - 3) E.g., the battle after the "millennium" described in Re 20:7-10
 - c. Various views are also offered for the blessing of Judah and Jerusalem in Joel 3:18-21
- With such differences in interpretation, one should not be dogmatic

C. HERE IS MY OWN UNDERSTANDING OF (Joel 2:30 to 3:21)

1. The passage is not to be taken literally
 - a. For we know that the Spirit was not literally poured out upon ALL flesh - Joel 2:28

- b. It would be physically impossible for ALL the nations to gather in the "Valley of Jehoshaphat" - Joel 3:2; Joel 3:12
- c. The "Valley of Acacias" is located on the other side of the Jordan River, making it geographically impossible to be watered by a stream from Jerusalem - Joel 3:18
- 2. This passage speaks in terms meaningful and comforting to Israelites in Joel's day
 - a. The prophecy was initially given to comfort them, give them hope for the future
 - b. Therefore prophetic elements are described in terms to which they could relate
 - 1) E.g., deliverance in their capital, Jerusalem - Joel 2:32
 - 2) E.g., judgment upon those enemies who oppressed them - Joel 3:1-8
 - 3) E.g., desolation of such enemies as Edom and Egypt - Joel 3:19
 - 4) E.g., blessings to befall the nation and the land - Joel 3:18; Joel 20-21
 - 3. But it refers to spiritual realities fulfilled with the coming of the Messiah!
 - a. Salvation and deliverance will indeed come out of Zion and Jerusalem - cf. Joel 2:32 with Lk 24:44-47; He 12:22-24
 - b. God will judge the enemies of His people - cf. Joel 3:1-17 with Rev Chapters 4 thru 20 (esp. Re 20:7-10)
 - c. In the end, God's people will prosper and the wicked will be desolate - cf. Joel 3:18-21 with Rev Chapters 21 & 22 (esp. Re 22:1-2)
 - 4. This is true whether or not any particular event is referred to in this passage
 - a. I lean toward the view that "the day of the Lord" in this passage is the FINAL JUDGMENT when the Lord comes again
 - b. Others think that it refers to the DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM in 70 A.D
 - c. Whatever one's interpretation, the application is the same
 - 1) The means and source of salvation: The Lord Himself - Joel 2:32
 - 2) The day of the Lord is coming!
 - a) A terrible day for the wicked - cf. Joel 3:14-16a
 - b) But for God's people there is shelter and strength - cf. Joel 3:16b
 - c) And in the end, blessings for the people of God, while their enemies lie desolate - cf. Joel 3:18-21

CONCLUSION

1. In studying "The Minor Prophets"
 - a. Determining the proper INTERPRETATION is certainly a worthy goal
 - b. But determining the proper APPLICATION is our essential task!
2. If this be true, then the crucial question is this: Have we found that salvation, deliverance, shelter and strength which only the Lord can provide when the final "day of the Lord" comes?

To know where to look, one should carefully read Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, after he had quoted Joel - cf. Ac 2:22-39

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Jonah - Messenger To Nineveh (The Book of Jonah)

INTRODUCTION

1. We now come to the most well known of "The Minor Prophets": Jonah, whose name means "Dove"
2. His book does not contain prophecy per se, rather it contains the history of a prophet
 - a. A prophet reluctant to fulfill the mission God assigned him
 - b. A prophet who complained when his mission proved successful -- What kind of prophet is that? Perhaps one that reveals what may be true of ourselves!
3. This short book of "Jonah" easily falls into four sections
 - a. "Running Away From God" (chapter one)
 - b. "Running To God" (chapter two)
 - c. "Running With God" (chapter three)
 - d. "Running Ahead of God" (chapter four)
4. In this brief survey of the book, we will simply read our way through it
 - a. Making observations as we go along
 - b. Offering lessons that can be glean from each section

[With the first chapter then, we soon find Jonah...]

I. "RUNNING AWAY FROM GOD" (Jonah 1:1-17)

A. AN OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTER

1. God commissions Jonah to preach in Nineveh - Jonah 1:1-2
2. Jonah rebels against God's plan - Jonah 1:3
3. God has a plan for Jonah - 1:4-17
 - a. He sends "a great wind on the sea" - Jonah 1:4-16
 - b. He prepares "a great fish" - Jonah 1:17

B. OBSERVATIONS IN READING THE TEXT

1. Jonah is also mentioned in 2 Kin 14:23-25
 - a. He prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II (ca. 793-753 B.C.)
 - b. He was from Gath Hopher (4 miles NE of what was later Nazareth in Galilee)
2. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria
 - a. It was located about 220 NNW of the present city of Baghdad
 - b. The Assyrians were noted for their cruelty, especially to prisoners
3. The city of Tarshish
 - a. A Phoenician outpost in SW Spain
 - b. On the edge of the Mediterranean world, Jonah was running in the opposite direction of Nineveh
4. In retrieving Jonah, God gained some converts (the sailors) - cf. Jonah 1:14-16

C. LESSONS FROM CHAPTER ONE

1. God concerns Himself with the wickedness of heathen nations - Jonah 1:2

2. One cannot run away from God! - cf. Ps 139:7-11
3. God is able to use incidents in the lives of His servants for His glory - cf. Jonah 1:5 with Jonah 1:14-16

[With the end of chapter one, Jonah is now in the belly of the great fish. Having run away from God, we now find him...]

II. "RUNNING TO GOD" (Jonah 2:1-10)

A. AN OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTER

1. Jonah's prayer - Jonah 2:1-9
2. Jonah's deliverance - Jonah 2:10

B. OBSERVATIONS IN READING THE TEXT

1. The prayer is written like a psalm; its present form may have been composed after the fact, looking back
2. Jonah realized that what happened was God's doing - Jonah 1:3
3. It is interesting to note that his prayer is more of a THANKSGIVING, than a petition

C. LESSONS FROM CHAPTER TWO

1. "Someone has observed that there are times when we must be made to go into the lowest depths that we may regain a living faith" (Hailey)
2. Prayers in time of need should be made with an attitude of thanksgiving as well as petition - cf. Ph 4:6

[Having learned his lesson, Jonah is now ready to do God's will; so we next see him]

III. "RUNNING WITH GOD" (Jonah 3:1-10)

A. AN OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTER

1. The Lord again commissions Jonah to preach in Nineveh - Jonah 3:1-2
2. Jonah obeys and proclaims God's message - Jonah 3:3-4
3. The people of Nineveh are moved to repent, including the king - Jonah 3:5-9
4. The Lord takes notice, and relents of the disaster He had intended to bring - Jonah 3:10

B. OBSERVATIONS IN READING THE TEXT

1. Jonah's message was brief, yet clear - Jonah 3:4
2. An unusual fast is proclaimed - Jonah 3:5-7
 - a. Three days without food AND water
 - b. For both man AND beast
3. With sackcloth for both man and beast, the king calls for a true change of behavior - Jonah 3:8-9; Jonah 3:11
4. The king of Assyria reasons like the prophet Joel - cf. Jonah 3:9 with Joel 2:14
5. Nineveh's example of repentance is a rebuke of Israel...
 - a. Israel in Jonah's own day - cf. 2 Kin 17:13-14; 2 Kin 17:18; 2 Chr 36:15-16
 - b. Israel in the days of Jesus - cf. Mt 12:41

C. LESSONS FROM CHAPTER THREE

1. Such preaching of condemnation is often conditional - cf. Jer 18:7-10
2. The least likely prospects might be the ones who will convert - e.g., 1 Co 6:9-11
3. We see the place of fasting and prayer, as one seeks to petition God - e.g., Ezr 8:21-23

[Jonah's mission was a success! Souls headed for destruction were saved! You would think that Jonah would have been elated. But in the final chapter we are surprised to see this prophet]

IV. "RUNNING AHEAD OF GOD" (Jonah 4:1-11)

A. AN OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTER

1. Jonah vents his anger - Jonah 4:1-4
 - a. Angry because he knew that God would relent - Jonah 4:1-2
 - b. So angry that he desires to die - Jonah 4:3-4
2. God uses common objects to teach Jonah - Jonah 4:5-8
 - a. A plant to provide shade for Jonah - Jonah 4:5-6
 - b. A worm to destroy the plant - Jonah 4:7
 - c. A vehement east wind that with the sun exhausts Jonah - Jonah 4:8
3. God uses the plant to teach Jonah an object lesson - Jonah 4:9-11
 - a. Jonah is angry about the plant - Jonah 4:9
 - b. Shouldn't he have similar pity on Nineveh? - Jonah 4:10-11

B. OBSERVATIONS IN READING THE TEXT

1. We find Jonah manifesting a sectarian spirit
 - a. Perhaps there was an underlying racism in Jonah's heart
 - b. This may explain why he fled to Tarshish in the beginning
2. He possessed the same spirit as:
 - a. The elder brother of the prodigal son - cf. Lk 15:11-32
 - b. The Pharisees toward Jesus eating with sinners - Mt 9:10-11
3. Jonah is shown to have more compassion for a plant, than for innocent children!

C. LESSONS FROM CHAPTER FOUR

1. We learn the danger of a sectarian spirit
 - a. It makes us to be petty
 - b. It blinds us to matters of greater importance
2. We see God's nature
 - a. He is gracious, merciful, slow to anger
 - b. Abundant in loving kindness, He is willing to relent when there is repentance

CONCLUSION

1. The book of Jonah is of value to PREACHERS...
 - a. Never prejudge an audience
 - b. Don't try to avoid the responsibility God has placed on you
2. The book of Jonah is of value to ALL CHRISTIANS...
 - a. Don't have a selfish, narrow-minded, sectarian spirit
 - b. Be concerned for all the wicked, whoever and wherever they are

3. The book of Jonah is of value to SINNERS...

a. God loves you

b. Destruction is coming...

1) But He sent Christ and the apostles to reveal His will and save you

2) Today He has His preachers and teachers to warn you

c. Salvation is available wherever there is true repentance and obedience!

Finally, may the example of Nineveh's repentance remind us of what Jesus said:

"The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here." (Mt 12:41)

Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah; have we repented at the preaching of One (Jesus) Who is much greater?

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

The Book of Amos - The Country Prophet (Part 1)

INTRODUCTION

1. In our survey of "The Minor Prophets", we have already considered...
 - a. Obadiah, who prophesied of the judgment to befall Edom
 - b. Joel, who proclaimed a locust plague as a harbinger of "the day of the Lord"
 - c. Jonah, God's messenger to the Assyrian city of Nineveh
2. Our next prophet is Amos...
 - a. A shepherd and gatherer of sycamore fruit called by God to prophesy - Amos 7:14-15
 - b. Who proclaimed God's message concerning eight nations, with an emphasis on the northern kingdom of Israel
3. His book is divided into three sections...
 - a. A series of "oracles" concerning sin and judgment of eight nations (ch. 1-2)
 - b. A series of "sermons" concerning the sin and judgment of Israel (ch. 3-6)
 - c. A series of "visions" regarding the sin and judgment of Israel (ch. 7-9)

[This lesson will examine the first section, with a look at the "oracles" Amos proclaimed against eight nations. We begin with a reading of Amos 1:1-2, which serves as an...]

I. INTRODUCTION (Amos 1:1-2)

A. THE MAN

1. NAME - Amos means "burden-bearer"
2. HOME - The village of Tekoa
 - a. 12 miles south of Jerusalem, 18 miles west of the Dead Sea
 - b. Near the wilderness of Judea, a very rugged area -- So while he was in Judah, he primarily prophesied against Israel in the north
3. OCCUPATION - "a sheepbreeder and a tender of sycamore fruit." (Amos 7:14)
 - a. An outdoorsman, accustomed to the wilds of nature, and of hard, honest toil
 - b. It would be easy for him to have little sympathy for the lazy and materialistic conduct of his northern kinsman
4. CHARACTER
 - a. Not known for his sympathy or warmth, but for his sense of justice and right
 - b. "Not a sob is to be found in his book for the nation of wicked apostates, and there is only a sigh for the poor" (Hailey)
 - c. He is reminiscent of John the Baptist

B. THE DATE...

1. He prophesied in the days of:
 - a. Uzziah, king of Judah
 - b. Jeroboam II of Israel
2. Two years before an earthquake

3. While the actual date is unknown, 755 B.C. is often suggested

C. THE PEOPLE...

1. His audience is primarily the northern kingdom of Israel
2. Conditions which characterized them at this time:
 - a. Wealthy, enjoying great luxury
 - b. Morally, religiously, and politically corrupt

D. HIS MESSAGE...

1. In Amos 1:2, we see a vivid picture of the Lord as a lion whose roar to the north reaches all the way to Mt. Carmel
2. This describes what God is doing through Amos, proclaiming a fiery message of condemnation and judgment against Israel and the surrounding nations
3. "The people of Israel were now at the summit of worldly prosperity, but were rapidly filling up the measure of their sins. The mission of Amos was, therefore, rather to threaten than to console. He rebukes, among other things, the corruption of their manners, which kept pace with their prosperity; he charges the great men with partiality as judges, and violence towards the poor; and he foretells, as a punishment from God, the captivity of the ten tribes in a foreign country..." - The Bible Handbook, Angus and Green

[With verse 2 as a good preview of the nature of Amos' prophecy, let's now survey the first main section of the book of Amos...]

II. THE "ORACLES" OF SIN AND JUDGMENT UPON THE NATIONS (Amos 1:3 TO 2:16)

A. DAMASCUS - Amos 1:3-5

1. SIN - cruelty toward the inhabitants of Gilead (the tribes of Gad and Reuben)
2. JUDGMENT - destruction and captivity
 - a. Hazael was the murderer of Ben-Hadad I, and usurper of his throne - 2 Ki 8:7-15
 - b. Ben-Hadad II was the son of Hazel - cf. 2 Ki 13:3; 2 Ki 13:22-25
3. FULFILLMENT - by the Assyrians - cf. 2 Ki 16:1-9

B. GAZA (PHILISTIA) - Amos 1:6-8

1. SIN - engaging in slave traffic
2. JUDGMENT - total devastation
3. FULFILLMENT - by the Assyrians

C. TYRE - Amos 1:9-10

1. SIN - slave traffic; did not remember the covenant of "brotherhood" (between Solomon and Hiram? - cf. 1 Ki 5:12)
2. JUDGMENT - destruction
3. FULFILLMENT - started by Nebuchadnezzar; finished by Alexander the Great

D. EDOM - Amos 1:11-12

1. SIN - cruelty to brethren - cf. Oba 1:10-12
2. JUDGMENT - destruction upon Teman (capital) and Bozrah (another chief city)
3. FULFILLMENT - by the Nabateans, ca 400 B.C.

E. AMMON - Amos 1:13-15

1. SIN - murder of pregnant women in Gilead (the tribes of Gad and Reuben)
2. JUDGMENT - destruction of Rabbah (capital) and captivity
3. FULFILLMENT - by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon

F. MOAB - Amos 2:1-3

1. SIN - burned the king of Edom's bones to lime
2. JUDGMENT - destruction of the chief city of Kerioth
3. FULFILLMENT - by the Babylonians

G. JUDAH - Amos 2:4-5

1. SIN - apostasy from the Law
2. JUDGMENT - Jerusalem (the capital) to be destroyed
3. FULFILLMENT - by Nebuchadnezzar, 586 B.C.

H. ISRAEL - Amos 2:6-16

1. SIN - several sins are listed...
 - a. Social injustice (slave trade and abuse of the poor)
 - b. Immorality (prostitution)
 - c. Idolatry (worshipping other gods)
 - d. Rebellion against God, who...
 - a. Cast out the Amorites before them
 - b. Delivered them from the land of Egypt
 - c. Gave them prophets and Nazarites, whom they corrupted -- The effect of which weighed God down like a cart full of sheaves - Amos 2:13
2. JUDGMENT - their inability to flee when destruction comes upon them
3. FULFILLMENT - by the Assyrians in 722-721 B.C. - 2 Ki 17:5-23

[It is apparent that the focus in this section is primarily upon the northern kingdom of Israel, even though Judah did not escape condemnation. What lessons might we glean from these first two chapters?]

III. LESSONS FROM THE "ORACLES" OF AMOS

A. GOD HOLDS THE NATIONS OF MEN ACCOUNTABLE...

1. He was not just concerned with His covenant people of Israel
2. As we saw with Obadiah and Jonah, God judged the surrounding nations as well
3. As Farrar says of Amos: "His whole message centers in the common prophetic conviction that God is the sole and righteous Governor of the world, judging the people righteously, and when they rebel, dashing them to pieces like a potter's vessel."
4. The same authority is given to Christ today! - cf. Mt 28:18; Rev 1:5; Rev 2:26-27

B. APOSTASY AND CRUELTY TREATED ALIKE...

1. God condemned:
 - a. The heathens for their cruelty
 - b. Judah and Israel for their apostasy from the Law
2. But their judgments were basically the same!

C. THE STANDARDS TO WHICH NATIONS WERE HELD ACCOUNTABLE...

1. The heathen were judged for their violation of basic principles of righteousness
2. The people of God were judged by their faithfulness to God's revealed Word! -- Akin to what we find Paul writing in Rom 2:12-15

CONCLUSION

1. In our next lesson we will continue our study of Amos...
 - a. Looking at chapters 3-6, which concentrate on the sins and judgment of Israel
 - b. Where more lessons can be gleaned for us to apply today
2. Having read the judgments God pronounced upon the eight nations...
 - a. We are reminded that God is a righteous GOD
 - b. One who holds men and nations accountable for their actions

Are we ready for that great Day of Judgment, in which we will one day be held accountable for our actions? As Paul wrote:

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..." (2 Co 5:10-11a)

Are you willing to let the Word of God persuade you to do what is right?

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Amos - The Country Prophet (Part II Chapters 3 thru 6)

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous study we began our survey of the book of Amos
 - a. A prophet of God, who was...
 - 1) A country shepherd and gatherer of sycamore fruit - Amos 7:14-15
 - 2) Called to proclaim God's judgments on the nations, especially Israel
 - b. Whose book is divided into three sections, in which we find...
 - 1) "Oracles" concerning sin and judgment of eight nations (ch.1-2)
 - 2) "Sermons" concerning the sin and judgment of Israel (ch. 3-6)
 - 3) "Visions" regarding the sin and judgment of Israel (ch. 7-9)
 - c. In his "oracles", we saw that God pronounced judgment upon...
 - 1) Heathen nations, such as Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab
 - 2) The people of God, both Judah and Israel -- With emphasis placed upon the sins and judgment of the northern kingdom of Israel
2. In this lesson, we shall direct our attention to the "sermons" in chapters 3 thru 6
 - a. There are three sermons, each beginning with "Hear this word..." - Amos 3:1; Amos 4:1; Amos 5:1
 - b. The focus of these sermons is Israel, the kingdom in the north

[From an outline by Ryrie, the first "sermon" could be entitled...]

I. THE DOOM OF ISRAEL (Amos 3:1-15)

A. AMOS DEFENDS HIS RIGHT TO PROPHECY...

1. The Lord has spoken against Israel - Ams 3:1-2
 - a. With whom He has had a special relationship
 - b. Whom He now will punish for their sins
2. Seven questions with obvious answers - Amos 3:3-6
 - a. The purpose and meaning of these questions have been variously interpreted
 - b. But their intent appears to enforce the logic of what follows in the next two verses
3. Can a prophet remain silent when God speaks? - Amos 3:7-8
 - a. The Lord does nothing unless He reveals it by one of His prophets
 - b. Like a lion that has roared (cf. Amos 1:2), God has spoken and Amos must prophesy!

B. ISRAEL'S DOOM...

1. Ashdod and Egypt are called to witness Israel's wickedness - Amos 3:9-10
2. Israel will be plundered by an adversary - Amos 3:11-15
 - a. Though never identified by Amos, Isaiah declared that it would be Assyria
 - b. Concerning Israel's coming punishment:
 - 1) Only a remnant will survive of those who dwell in luxury, like a piece of lamb left over after being ravaged by a lion
 - 2) Destruction will come upon the altars of Bethel (cf. Jeroboam's idolatry)
 - 3) Destruction will befall their luxurious homes

[With this first "sermon", destruction is pronounced upon Israel. The sin of some of the men was mentioned earlier (Amos 2:6-8), with the next "sermon" we see the wickedness of the women...]

II. THE DEPRAVITY OF THE WOMEN OF ISRAEL (Amos 4:1-13)

A. THE "COWS OF BASHAN", THEY ARE INSATIABLE...

1. Living in Samaria (Israel) they were:
 - a. Oppressing the poor and needy - Amos 4:1
 - b. Crying out for wine - Amos 4:2
2. For which they will suffer painful deportation to a foreign land - Amos 4:3

B. A SARCASTIC CALL TO WORSHIP...

1. To worship their false gods at Bethel and Gilgal - Amos 4:4-5
2. Designed to show how far they have departed from God

C. THEY HAD REJECTED GOD'S CHASTISEMENTS...

1. They had failed to respond to God's efforts to get them to repent
 - a. Famine - Amos 4:6
 - b. Drought - Amos 4:7-8
 - c. Pestilence - Amos 4:9
 - d. Plague and war - Amos 4:10
 - e. Earthquake, or perhaps volcanic eruptions - Amos 4:11
2. Therefore they must prepare to meet their God!
 - a. Who is bringing such judgments upon them - Amos 4:12
 - b. Whose name is "The LORD God of hosts" - Amos 4:13

[In light of such a judgment to befall Israel, it is not surprising to see that the third "sermon" is in the form of a lamentation...]

III. A DIRGE OVER ISRAEL (Amos Chapters 5 & 6)

A. A LAMENTATION FOR THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL...

1. In view of her coming fall - Amos 5:1-2
2. In which only a remnant will be left - Amos 5:3

B. A CALL TO REPENTANCE, FOR THERE IS STILL HOPE...

1. Seek the Lord and live, lest He come with fiery judgment! - Amos 5:4-7
2. Seek Him who is all powerful! - Amos 5:8-9
3. For He knows your manifold sins! - Amos 5:10-13
4. Seek that which is good, not evil; perhaps God will be gracious! - Amos 5:14-15

C. THE COMING DAY OF THE LORD...

1. The Lord is coming, and there shall be wailing in the streets and fields - Amos 5:16-17
2. The day of the Lord is not to be desired by sinful men
 - a. For it will be a day of darkness - Amos 5:18-20
 - b. For God is repelled by their show of religion, when there should be righteousness and justice - Amos 5:21-24
 - c. For they have never really served God, even in the wilderness - Amos 5:25-26
3. Therefore they will be taken "beyond Damascus" (Assyria!) - Amos 5:25-27

D. A WARNING EVEN TO THOSE IN ZION...

1. Woe to those who are at ease, trusting in Samaria (i.e., the northern kingdom of Israel) - Amos 6:1-2
 - a. Perhaps to defend them?
 - b. Consider what happened to kingdoms far greater!
2. Woe to those who say the day of the Lord is far off - Amos 6:3-6
 - a. Who bask in their luxury
 - b. While their brethren are afflicted

3. They shall be among the first to go into captivity - Amos 6:7

E. THE EXTENT OF THE COMING DESTRUCTION...

1. Coming because God hates their pride - Amos 6:8
2. A destruction where men will be scarce, and their houses destroyed - Amos 6:9-11
3. Why? Because they perverted justice and righteousness, priding themselves in their own strength - Amos 6:12-13
4. But God will raise up a nation (Assyria) against them, who will afflict them from the north ("the entrance of Hamath") to the south ("the Valley of the Arabah") - Amos 6:14

[So ends the third of these three "sermons" of Amos. Before we conclude our study, let us share some...]

IV. OBSERVATIONS FROM THE "SERMONS" OF AMOS

A. THE RECURRING THEMES OF JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS...

1. Several times we find references to justice and righteousness - Amos 5:7; Amos 3:15; Amos 3:24; Amos 6:12
2. Their opposites are also mentioned: oppression and evil - Amos 3:10 ; Amos 4:1; Amos 5:10-12
3. Lacking justice and righteousness, all their religion, wealth, and power were in vain! -- Is there not a lesson for us to learn here? - cf. Mt 5:23-24

B. ISRAEL'S FAILURE TO HEED GOD'S CHASTISEMENTS...

1. That God used natural calamity to get their attention is evident - Amos 4:6-11
2. Why did they not heed God's efforts?
 - a. Perhaps they did not make the connection
 - b. Perhaps they assumed it was just a coincidence
3. One would be amiss to always attribute natural calamities to God's working; yet...
 - a. Should we not be open to the possibility that God may be saying something?
 - b. Should we not at least use such occasions to reflect on our relationship with God?

C. REGARDING THE DAY OF THE LORD...

1. The "day of the Lord" is a day of judgment, and a day of darkness - Amos 5:18
 - a. In Amos it has reference to God's judgment upon Israel, which came when Assyria took them into captivity
 - b. But such judgment prefigures the Final Judgment, the "day of the Lord"
 - 1) In which Christ will come to judge the world - Ac 17:30-31
 - 2) It too will be a day of "darkness" - cf. 2 Pe 3:7; 2 Pe 3:12
2. While we might not desire that "day" per se, we do look forward to what is to follow - cf. 2 Pe 3:13-14

D. GOD'S GRACIOUS OFFER OF REPENTANCE...

1. Even with the pronouncement of judgment, there is an offer to have life if one repents - Amos 5:4-6; Amos 5:14-15
2. As we saw with Joel and Jonah, God was willing to relent for those who repented
3. Even today, while the gospel proclaims judgment to come, it also offers salvation! - cf. 2 Co 6:1-2

CONCLUSION

1. Unfortunately, not many heeded the warnings of Amos - cf. 2 Ki 17:13-23
 - a. Within thirty years (722 B.C.), Israel was taken into captivity
 - b. Under the cruel hand of the Assyrians, they experienced the righteous judgment of God
2. What about us, will we heed the warnings of Christ and His apostles?
 - a. Their message is really not that different ("seek the Lord and live", "seek good and not evil")
 - b. They too call upon us to repent and seek the Lord through faith and obedience, though it is obedience to the gospel of Christ and not the Law of Moses

Remember that the book of Amos, along with the rest of the Old Testament, was:

"...written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." (1 Co 10:11)

Are we willing to learn from its admonition, such as those found in the prophecies of Amos?

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Amos - The Country Prophet (Part III Chapters 7, 8 and 9)

INTRODUCTION

1. In the first two studies on the book of Amos, we briefly surveyed...
 - a. The "Oracles" of Amos, concerning sin and judgment of eight nations (ch. 1-2)
 - b. The "Sermons" of Amos, concerning the sin and judgment of Israel (ch. 3-6)
2. In this third and final lesson on Amos, we will...
 - a. Focus our attention on the last three chapters which contain...
 - 1) Five "Visions" of Amos
 - 2) An "interlude" in which Amos defends his prophetic role
 - 3) A closing glimpse of a brighter future
 - b. Offer a summary of lessons gleaned from the book of Amos

[Let's begin, then by noting...]

I. THE "VISIONS" OF AMOS (Amos 7:1 to 9:15)

A. THE VISION OF THE LOCUSTS (Amos 7:1-3)

1. The vision and the Lord's response to Amos' prayer...
 - a. The Lord shows Amos a swarm of locusts devastating the crops
 - b. Amos cries out in behalf of Jacob (Israel)
 - c. The Lord hears, and relents so that the locust plague will not happen
2. The meaning of the vision...
 - a. Some take the locust plague to be a figurative symbol of an invading army
 - b. Whether literal or figurative, the judgment it represented is averted by the pleading of the prophet
 - c. It is reminiscent of what we saw in Joel, how the nation's repentance averted the reoccurrence of the "locust invasion" - cf. Joel 2:1-24

B. THE VISION OF THE FIRE (Amos 7:4-6)

1. The vision and the Lord's response to Amos' prayer...
 - a. The Lord shows Amos a fire consuming the "great deep" and the territory
 - b. Once again Amos cries out in behalf of Jacob (Israel)
 - c. The Lord again hears, and relents from bringing the conflagration upon Israel
2. The meaning of the vision...
 - a. Clearly figurative, for the "great deep" is likely the Mediterranean Sea
 - b. Whatever judgment it represents it is also averted by the prayer of Amos
 - c. These first two visions appear to illustrate God's longsuffering due to the prayers of the righteous

C. THE VISION OF THE PLUMB LINE (Amos 7:7-9)

1. The vision and the Lord's explanation...
 - a. The Lord is standing on a wall with a plumb line in hand

b. The Lord explains He is setting a plumb line in the midst of Israel, and will now bring destruction upon:

- 1) The places of idolatrous worship ("high places" and "sanctuaries")
 - 2) The house of Jeroboam (the ruling king of Israel, cf. Amos 1:1)
2. The meaning of the vision...
- a. A plumb line is used to measure the correctness of any construction
 - b. God has so measured Israel, and found her so defective that He cannot overlook her anymore
 - c. The judgment will involve destruction of her religious and political leaders

D. AN INTERLUDE: AMAZIAH'S COMPLAINT AGAINST AMOS (Amos 7:10-17)

1. Amaziah, priest of Bethel (center of idolatrous worship), accuses Amos of conspiracy against Jeroboam king of Israel - Amos 7:10-11
2. Amaziah tells Amos to leave Bethel and go back to his own country of Judah - Amos 7:12-13
3. Amos defends his prophetic mission - Amos 7:14-15
4. Amos then prophesies against Amaziah and Israel - Amos 7:16-17

E. THE VISION OF THE SUMMER FRUIT (Amos 8:1-14)

1. The vision and the Lord's explanation - Amos 8:1-3
 - a. Amos is shown a basket of summer fruit (evidently quite ripened)
 - b. The Lord reveals that Israel's end is near, and is ripe for judgment
2. Once again, the nature of Israel's sin is described - Amos 8:4-6
 - a. Oppression of the poor and needy - cf. Amos 2:6-7
 - b. Disdain for religious observances, because they hinder economic enterprise
 - c. Dishonest economic practices, to further abuse the poor and needy
3. The nature of Israel's judgment is described - Amos 8:7-14
 - a. A day of mourning is coming - Amos 8:7-10
 - b. A day of famine for the word of God is coming - Amos 8:11-12
 - c. Those who trust in idolatry will fall and never rise again - Amos 8:13-14

F. THE VISION OF THE LORD BY THE ALTAR (Amos 9:1-10)

1. Is this the altar of Jerusalem, or Bethel? (I suspect the latter)
2. The altar shall be destroyed, and none shall escape - Amos 9:1-4
3. The One who shall accomplish this is described - Amos 9:5-6
4. Israel has become little different than the heathen nations - Amos 9:7
5. The careful, discriminate, nature of the Lord's judgment - Amos 9:8-10
 - a. The "kingdom" will be utterly destroyed
 - b. But the "house of Jacob" will not
 - c. What little is good will be spared, as grain sifted in a sieve
 - d. But the sinners shall not escape, despite their claims to the contrary

G. A GLIMPSE OF A BRIGHTER FUTURE - Amos 9:11-15

1. The restoration of the tabernacle of David is foretold, in which even the remnant of Edom and Gentiles who are called by His name are possessed - Amos 9:11-12
2. The restoration described in terms of agricultural abundance - Amos 9:13-15
3. James applied the fulfillment of this prophecy to the church and the inclusion of the Gentiles by the gospel - cf. Acts 15:13-17
4. So the prophecy is figurative...
 - a. Given in terms especially comforting to those of Amos' day

b. Yet actually referring to spiritual blessings found in Christ today!

[Visions in the Bible often are designed to impact more the heart of man rather than his mind. So it is with these visions of Amos: depicting God's longsuffering, His judgment upon the nation of Israel, and His promise of future blessings for Israel and the nations (the last fulfilled with the coming of Christ).

Before we close, let's review...]

II. A SUMMARY OF LESSONS GLEANED FROM AMOS

A. CONCERNING GOD...

1. He rules the nations and holds them accountable - Amos Chs. 1,2
2. His omnipotence may be seen in:
 - a. His acts of creation - Amos 4:3; Amos 5:8
 - b. His control over the forces of nature - Amos 4:6-11
 - c. His supremacy over the nations - Amos Chs. 1,2
3. His omnipresence is plainly taught (Amos 9:2-4), also His omniscience (Amos 4:13)
4. The righteousness of God is constantly emphasized by Amos - e.g., Amos 5:24

B. CONCERNING ISRAEL...

1. They were the people of God, having a special relationship with God - Amos 3:1-2
2. They should have reflected the glory of God - cf. Amos 5:14-15
3. They failed, and so judgment would follow; but a remnant would be spared that would later bless the Gentiles - Amos 9:11-12

C. MISCELLANEOUS LESSONS...

1. Justice between man and man is one of the divine foundations of society
2. Privilege implies responsibility
 - a. Israel had enjoyed special privileges
 - b. Therefore she had been give special responsibilities
3. Failure to recognize and accept responsibility is sure to bring God's judgment
4. The most elaborate worship is but an insult to God when offered by those who have no mind to conform to His commands -- These lessons were offered by Homer Hailey in his book, "A Commentary On The Minor Prophets" (Baker Book House)

CONCLUSION

1. Many other lessons can likely be gleaned from a book like Amos; the "Disciples' Study Bible" offers these:
 - a. Merely observing proper forms of worship is not sufficient for a right relation with God (pure religion takes into consideration one's treatment of the poor and needy - cf. Ja 1:27)
 - b. Being a part of God's people does not guarantee exemption from judgment (Israel and Judah certainly weren't exempt)
 - c. Not all judgment seeks to penalize and hurt (many were designed to restore man back to God, Amos 4:6-11)
2. Can we not see the value of studying the Old Testament prophets?
 - a. They are truly "written for our admonition" - 1 Co 10:11

b. They are truly "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," -
2 Ti 3:16

In Amos 8:11-12, we read of a famine for the Word of the Lord that would befall Israel, which occurred when they were taken into Assyrian captivity. Let's be sure that we do not experience a self-imposed famine of the Word by neglecting to study and glean from such prophets like Amos!

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Hosea - Part I of IV God's Redeeming Love (Hosea Chapters 1, 2 & 3)

INTRODUCTION

1. About the time that Amos (the "country prophet") was prophesying to the northern kingdom of Israel, another prophet came on to the scene
 - a. His name was Hosea
 - b. Whose name means "salvation" ('Joshua' and 'Jesus' are derived from the same word)
2. While the audience was the same, there were some differences...
 - a. Amos was from Judah (Tekoa); Hosea appears to have been from Israel
 - b. While Amos showed little patience with his northern relatives, Hosea displayed a large degree of sympathetic understanding toward his own people
 - c. Just as Amos is reminiscent of John the Baptist in his approach, so Hosea is reminiscent of how Jesus approached people

[In this lesson, the first of several on Hosea, we will see why Hosea was so sympathetic, even as he condemned his own people for their sins. Let's start with some...]

I. BACKGROUND MATERIAL

A. THE MAN...

1. His father was named Beerli (Hosea 1:1), but nothing more is known of his ancestors
2. Some think he may have been a priest, in view of his high regard for the duties and responsibilities of the priesthood
3. We read of his wife (Gomer, Hosea 1:3) and his children...
 - a. Jezreel, a son - Hosea 1:4
 - b. Lo-Ruhamah, a daughter - Hosea 1:6
 - c. Lo-Ammi, another son - Hosea 1:8-9 -- Through his family, the basic message of Hosea will be illustrated (see below)

B. THE DATE...

1. Hosea prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; Jeroboam II also reigned during this time in Israel - Hosea 1:1
2. Most place the time of his work at 750-725 B.C.
3. Hosea was possibly a young man when Amos was almost through with his ministry
4. His work in relation to other prophets during this period of time:
 - a. Amos and Hosea prophesied to Israel
 - b. Isaiah and Micah were prophesying in Judah

C. BACKGROUND OF THE TIMES...

1. For a good background of this period of Bible history, see 2 Kings, chapters 14-17; 2 Chr chapters 26-29
2. The northern kingdom of Israel was on its last legs...

- a. Sin was even more rampant than seen in the book of Amos
- b. Religious, moral, and political corruption was rampant
- 3. One word sums the condition of the nation of Israel: harlotry (whoredom, KJV), used thirteen times throughout the book

D. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK...

- 1. An analogy is made between Hosea's experience with Gomer, and the Lord's experience with Israel
- 2. This analogy is described in Hosea, chapters 1 to 3, and serves as the backdrop to chapters 4 thru 14

[With this brief introduction to the book of Hosea, let's now survey the first three chapters...]

II. HOSEA'S FAMILY, AND THE ANALOGY WITH ISRAEL (Hosea, chs 1 thru 3)

A. ISRAEL'S REJECTION SYMBOLIZED... (Hosea 1:2-9)

- 1. Hosea commanded to marry "a wife of harlotry" - Hosea 1:2-3
 - a. Her name was Gomer
 - b. If the parallel between Gomer and Israel is exact, then she was not a harlot at the time of the marriage; but her background would prompt her to become one
 - c. She certainly would come to symbolize what Israel had become
- 2. Gomer bears three children - Hosea 1:4-9
 - a. The first son is named "Jezreel"
 - 1) Which means "God scatters", or "God sows"
 - 2) His name prefigured God's judgment on the ruling house of Israel - Hosea 1:4-5
 - b. The daughter is named "Lo-Ruhamah"
 - 1) Which means "no mercy"
 - 2) Her name describes God's attitude toward Israel, though Judah still found grace in God's sight - Hosea 1:6-7
 - 3) Some suggest that the daughter (and the son to follow) were not Hosea's
 - a) Note it does not say she bore "him" (Hosea) a daughter, as before
 - b) I.e., Gomer had become a harlot - cf. Hosea 2:4
 - c. The second son is named "Lo-Ammi"
 - 1) His name means "not my people"
 - 2) Thus God declares his rejection of Israel - Hosea 1:8-9

B. ISRAEL'S RESTORATION FORETOLD... (Hosea 1:10 thru 2:1)

- 1. Though cast off, God promises a restoration
- 2. There might be a reference to the restoration from Assyrian and Babylonian captivity
- 3. However, both Paul and Peter apply this promise to believing Jews and Gentile in the church - Ro 9:25-26; 1 Pe 2:10

C. ISRAEL'S UNFAITHFULNESS... (Hosea 2:2-13)

- 1. Condemnation for her sinful conduct - Hosea 2:2-5
 - a. Charges of harlotry and adultery
 - b. No mercy on her children, as the children of harlotry -- God's rage for Israel's unfaithfulness described in terms of an enraged husband who learns not only of his wife's adultery, but that the children are not his

2. Punishment for her sinful conduct - Hosea 2:6-13
 - a. God will prevent Israel from finding her lovers
 - b. God will take away the blessings and the feasts that Israel enjoyed
 - c. God will destroy what Israel has used to commit spiritual harlotry -- Israel's sin was foremost her idolatry (cf. references to "Baal"); God viewed such idolatry as a form of "harlotry"!

D. ISRAEL'S RESTORATION DESCRIBED... (Hosea 2:14-23)

1. Using a "wilderness", God will win her back, just as He did in the days of Moses and Joshua - Hosea 2:14-15
2. God will cure her of using the language of Baal worship - Hosea 2:16-17
3. God will establish a covenant of peace and safety, and betroth Israel to Him once again - Hosea 2:18-20
4. God will once again bless them, and be merciful to them as His people - Hosea 2:21-23 -- While there may be references to the restoration from captivity, it also foreshadows the age of the Messiah and His spiritual blessings - cf. Ro 9:25-26; 1 Pe 2:10

E. ISRAEL'S RESTORATION SYMBOLIZED... (Hosea 3:1-5)

1. Hosea is charged to love an adulterous woman - Hosea 3:1-3
 - a. Most take this to be Gomer, who had gone into harlotry
 - b. Hosea takes her back, though with a period of probation
2. Symbolizing God's willingness to take Israel back - Hosea 3:4-5
 - a. Also with a probationary period, in which there be no king, sacrifices, etc.
 - b. But Israel would return, and seek the Lord and David their king (the Messiah?)

CONCLUSION

1. In these first three chapters, it appears God used Hosea to teach Israel an object lesson...
 - a. Through Hosea's experience with Gomer, God provided Israel a concrete illustration of what His relationship with Israel had been like
 - b. Israel had played the harlot; but God would take her back, following a period of punishment and probation -- Keeping this analogy in mind will assist our understanding of the remaining chapters
2. A lesson to be learned from this analogy is how God views apostasy: spiritual harlotry!
 - a. Christians, we are "betrothed to Christ - cf. 2 Co 11:2
 - b. But we too can become spiritual harlots" if we are not careful! - 2 Co 11:3

Are we being true to our betrothal? May the words of the Lord in Hosea encourage us to remain ever faithful:

"I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD."
(Hosea 2:19-20)

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Hosea - Part II of IV God's Redeeming Love (Hosea, chapters 4 thru 7)

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous lesson we began our survey of the book of Hosea...
 - a. Noting that Hosea was a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel
 - b. Whose work began as Amos' was ending, and prophesied from 750-725 B.C.
2. The key to understanding the book is the analogy illustrated in the first three chapters...
 - a. In which Hosea and his wife Gomer illustrates God's experience with Israel
 - b. Which served as an object lesson to express "God's Redeeming Love" for His people
3. We therefore saw in the first three chapters...
 - a. Israel's rejection symbolized, in the names of Hosea and Gomer's children - Hosea 1:2-9
 - b. Israel's restoration foretold - Hosea 1:10 to Hosea 2:1
 - c. Israel's unfaithfulness described, depicted as a wife guilty of harlotry - Hosea 2:2-13
 - d. Israel's restoration described, cured of her idolatry - Hosea 2:14-23
 - e. Israel's restoration symbolized, depicted as a harlot taken back to be a wife - Hosea 3:1-5
4. The rest of the book contains the messages of Hosea, proclaimed with this analogy in the background; there is...
 - a. God's indictment of Israel and her sins - Hosea 4:1 thru 7:16
 - b. God's warning of punishment that is to befall her - Hosea 8:1 thru 10:15
 - c. God's promise of a future restoration - Hosea 11:1 thru 14:9

[In this lesson, we shall continue our survey of Hosea by noticing God's indictment of Israel for her sins, chapters 4-7...]

I. GOD'S INDICTMENT OF ISRAEL (Hosea 4:1-7 to chapter 14)

A. THE CHARGE AGAINST ISRAEL (Hosea 4:1-5:15)

1. Against the nation as a whole - Hosea 4:1-3
 - a. For no truth, mercy, or knowledge of God is in the land
 - b. All forms of wickedness are rampant
2. Against the priests in particular - Hosea 4:4-14
 - a. It does no good to contend with the people, for people do not respect their priests
 - b. The priests themselves have rejected knowledge, which is to their destruction
 - c. The priests feed off the sins of the people, increasing their own spiritual adultery
3. A word of warning to Judah in the south - Hosea 4:15-19
 - a. Judah, don't be like Israel!
 - b. Judah, leave Ephraim (Israel) to her idols!
4. Against the priests, rulers, and people - Hosea 5:1-7
 - a. They have been a snare, not a help

- b. Their idolatry has led Israel to stumble, even Judah as well
 - c. God has withdrawn Himself from them
5. The impending sentence - Hosea 5:8-15
- a. Ephraim (Israel) shall be laid waste, and Judah shall not escape either
 - b. Like a lion, God will come upon them and tear them away
 - c. This God will do until they confess their sin and diligently seek Him

B. THEIR APPEAL REJECTED (Hosea 6:1-7 to 7:16)

1. The call to repentance - Hosea 6:1-3
 - a. Some believe these three verses are Hosea's desperate plea to Israel to repent
 - b. Others think that these are the words of Israel, but was not sincere
 - In either case, verse four reveals the shallowness of Israel's faithfulness
2. Rejected because of Israel's true condition - Hosea 6:4 thru 7:16
 - a. Faithfulness was only temporary, like the morning cloud or early dew
 - b. They offered sacrifices, but did not show mercy or truly know God
 - c. They transgressed the covenant, and became defiled, even influencing Judah
 - d. When God would have healed them, their iniquity was even worse
 - e. Idolatry, alliances with pagan nations, rejection of God's efforts to discipline them...all these things were the charges brought against Israel!

[Like a Judge in court God has brought His charges against unfaithful Israel. Like an unfaithful spouse who committed adultery, so Israel has done to God! Our next study will consider God's warning of the punishment to befall Israel, but before we finish this lesson let's review..]

II. SOME KEY PASSAGES IN THIS SECTION

A. "MY PEOPLE ARE DESTROYED FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE"

1. Notice Hosea 4:1; Hosea 4:6
2. This verse, like many others in the Bible, emphasizes the importance of knowing the Word of God - cf. Ja 1:21 -- How is your knowledge of God's Word?

B. "EPHRAIM IS JOINED TO IDOLS, LET HIM ALONE"

1. Consider Hosea 4:17
2. The context is that of warning Judah to stay away from Israel
3. There often comes a time when efforts to restore the erring are futile; rather than risk being influenced adversely, withdrawal of association is necessary - cf. 1 Co 5:11-13

C. "YOUR FAITHFULNESS IS LIKE A MORNING CLOUD..."

1. Read Hosea 6:4
2. Many people are quick to profess repentance, but do not remain true to the Lord; how faithful to the Lord are we?

D. "FOR I DESIRE MERCY AND NOT SACRIFICE..."

1. This passage (Hosea 6:6) was often quoted by Jesus - Mt 9:13; Mt 12:7
2. It reflects what was said in the Proverbs - Pro 21:3
3. Micah taught the same principle - Mic 6:6-8
4. It is not that God did not call for sacrifice, but all the worship in the world will not cover a lack of mercy and true knowledge of God! - cf. Hosea 4:6 , also Jer 9:23-24

E. "THEY DO NOT CONSIDER IN THEIR HEARTS THAT I REMEMBER..."

1. Look at Hosea 7:2
2. How sad that people sin, as though there is no God who takes notice of what they are doing
3. But a time is coming when all that has been done will be brought to light! - cf. Eccl 12:14; Ro 2:16; Rev 20:12 -- Our only hope is to have our sins forgiven by the blood of Jesus!

F. "EPHRAIM HAS MIXED HIMSELF AMONG THE PEOPLES"

1. Cf. Hosea 7:8
2. Through unsavory associations, Israel had been corrupted
3. Such is the danger of having wrong companions and "peer pressure" - cf. 1 Co 15:33
4. Thus we learn from warnings, as found in 2 Cor 6:14-18

CONCLUSION

1. Truly the words of prophets like Hosea were "written for our admonition" - 1 Co 10:11
 - a. Like Israel, we have been richly blessed - Ep 1:3
 - b. Like Israel, we are expected to remain faithful - Rev 2:10
2. The question is, will we "fall after the same example of disobedience"? - cf. He 4:11
 - a. Will we fall for lack of knowledge?
 - b. Will we fall because our faithfulness is like a morning cloud or early dew?
 - c. Will we fall because we forget the importance of mercy in our service to God?
 - d. Will we fall because we do not consider that God remembers what we do?
 - e. Will we fall because rather than be the "salt of the earth", we become so "mixed" by those in the world we lose our flavor? cf. Mt 5:14

Through a careful and serious study of the prophets, we are more likely to avoid making the same mistakes as Israel, and to heed the words of the apostle Paul:

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

1 Co 10:12

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Hosea - Part III of IV God's Redeeming Love (Hosea 8:1-10:15)

INTRODUCTION

1. Thus far in our survey of the book of Hosea, we have seen...
 - a. The analogy of Hosea and Gomer, illustrating God's experience with Israel
 - 1) Israel's rejection symbolized, in the names of Hosea and Gomer's children - Hos 1:2-9
 - 2) Israel's restoration foretold - Hos 1:10-2:1
 - 3) Israel's unfaithfulness described, depicted as a wife guilty of harlotry - Hos 2:2-13
 - 4) Israel's restoration described, finally cured of her idolatry - Hos 2:14-23
 - 5) Israel's restoration symbolized, depicted as a harlot taken back to be a wife - Hos 3:1-5
 - b. God's indictment of Israel
 - 1) The charges brought against Israel - Hos 4:1-5:15
 - 2) Israel's appeal rejected - Hos 6:1-7:16 -- The theme proposed for this book has been "God's Redeeming Love"
2. The love God has for Israel does not preclude the need for punishment if she is to be truly redeemed...
 - a. As mentioned in Hos 2:13
 - b. This punishment will be seen in the form of the Assyrian invasion, as foretold in the section now before us

[In this lesson, we shall continue our survey of Hosea by noticing God's warning of punishment that is to befall Israel, chapters 8-10...]

I. GOD'S PUNISHMENT FOR ISRAEL (Hosea 8:1-10:15)

- A. WARNING OF APPROACHING JUDGMENT (Hosea 8:1-14)
 1. Judgment is coming because they transgressed the covenant - Hos 8:1-6
 2. They have sown the wind, through their alliances with Assyria, and shall reap the whirlwind - Hos 8:7-10
 3. The altars of their religion has made them sin, their punishment will be a "return to Egypt" (Egypt as a symbol of captivity) - Hos 8:11-13
 4. Israel has forgotten his Maker, and even Judah places more trust in fortified cities; but judgment will come upon them both - Hos 8:14
- B. ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY FORETOLD (Hosea 9:1-17)
 1. Because Israel has played the harlot - Hos 9:1-2
 2. Ephraim (Israel) shall "return to Egypt" - Hos 9:3-9
 - a. Egypt used as a type for captivity, but then Assyria is mentioned by name
 - b. They will be unable to celebrate the feasts
 - c. They will be punished for their sins
 3. The fleeting glory of Israel - Hos 9:10-17
 - a. Though considered the firstfruits, they soon gave themselves over to idolatry

- b. Thus their glory will fly away, and they will be like one childless
- c. For their wickedness, God will cast them away

C. ISRAEL'S SIN AND CAPTIVITY REITERATED (Hosea 10:1-15)

- 1. Her guilt and coming captivity - Hos 10:1-8
- 2. Her sin and coming punishment - Hos 10:9-15

[With such ample warnings through prophets like Hosea, God let Israel know what was to befall her. Yet the prophet's message did not end there. A message of hope concerning restoration was also proclaimed, which we will shall consider in our next lesson. For a few remaining moments, let's review...]

II. SOME KEY PASSAGES IN THIS SECTION

A. "I HAVE WRITTEN FOR HIM THE GREAT THINGS OF MY LAW, BUT THEY WERE CONSIDERED A STRANGE THING"

- 1. Notice Hos 8:12
- 2. This is a sad commentary on the condition of Israel
 - a. God had done a wondrous thing by giving them His Word - cf. Ps 19:7-11
 - b. Yet they had become so perverted that God's word seemed strange to them!
- 3. Is this not true today as well?
 - a. We have been richly blessed with the full revelation of God's will through His Son Jesus Christ
 - b. Yet many people (even some in the church)...
 - 1) ...are so unaware of what the Bible says
 - 2) ...are so caught up in the thinking of the world ...that the principles and truths of God's word are "considered a strange thing"! -- Is God's word considered a strange thing to you?

B. "SOW FOR YOURSELVES RIGHTEOUSNESS, REAP IN MERCY"

- 1. Consider Hos 10:12
- 2. While we cannot earn our salvation by good works, works of righteousness can result in experiencing God's grace and mercy
 - a. A case in point is the conversion of Cornelius - Ac 10:1-6
 - b. His fear of God, prayers, and alms did not save him, but God did take notice
 - c. By striving to serve and please God, he came to know the way of mercy and salvation -- Thus we should be diligent in our service, not to earn salvation, but to receive God's gracious mercy - e.g., Onesiphorus - 2 Ti 1:16-18

C. "YOU HAVE PLOWED WICKEDNESS, YOU HAVE REAPED INIQUITY"

- 1. Read Hos 10:13
- 2. Iniquity (injustice, NASB) is the natural consequence of wickedness
 - a. When people turn their ears away from hearing the Word of God, they will be wicked
 - b. And the consequence is great injustice and lawlessness -- Sadly, I believe we can see why our society is reaping so much injustice and lawlessness today (because of the wickedness that is sown)

CONCLUSION

- 1. The messages of Hosea, though first spoken to a people of an earlier time, speak to us also...
 - a. History tends to repeat itself; we need to learn from the mistakes of others

b. The people of God are not immune from apostasy, wickedness and rebellion

2. As Paul wrote to the church of Corinth, after reviewing parts of Israel's history...

"Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted." (1 Co 10:6)

3. God's "intent" in preserving the Old Testament was that we might benefit from Israel's mistakes

a. The works of prophets like Hosea can certainly help

b. Will his words be well known to us, or will they too be "considered a strange thing"?

I pray this study will help his words become more familiar to us...

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Hosea - Part IV of IV God's Redeeming Love (Hosea 11:1-14:9)

INTRODUCTION

1. In our survey of the book of Hosea we have proposed the theme as "God's Redeeming Love"; this may have seemed strange...
 - a. As we considered "God's Indictment of Israel" in chapters 4-7
 - b. As we considered "God's Punishment for Israel" in chapters 8-10
2. But as we saw in the first three chapters, Hosea's experience with Gomer serves as an analogy of God's experience with Israel...
 - a. Following the adultery there was a period of separation
 - b. Following the separation there was the ultimate restoration -- Therefore Israel would be restored, but only after a period of separation
3. Here is another way to summarize chapters 4 thru 14...
 - a. God is holy (which is why He must indict Israel for her sins) - Hosea 4-7
 - b. God is just (which is why Israel must be punished for her sins) - Hosea 8-10
 - c. God is love (which is why He will restore Israel) - Hosea 11-14 -- So having declared the holiness and justice of God, Hosea now proclaims His great love for Israel

[In this lesson we shall complete our study of Hosea by first looking at...]

I. GOD'S PROMISE OF A FUTURE RESTORATION (Hosea 11:1 to 14:9)

A. GOD'S LOVE DESPITE ISRAEL'S REBELLION (Hosea 11:1-11)

1. God brought Israel out of Egypt, yet they worshipped Baal - Hosea 11:1-2 [Originally Baal was a Phoenician deity but later embraced by the Egyptians who taught the captive Jews to worship him.]
2. God nurtured Israel though they knew it not - Hosea 11:3-4
3. God will send them to Assyria because of their backsliding - Hosea 11:5-7
4. Yet God will return them to their homes - Hosea 11:8-11

B. ISRAEL'S REBELLION AND GOD'S CHASTISEMENT (Hosea 11:12 to 13:16)

1. Ephraim (Israel) is full of sin, and while Judah still walks with God to a degree, God has a complaint against Judah as well - Hosea 11:12-12:6
2. Ephraim is cunning and boastful, and so God will bring his reproach upon him - Hosea 12:7-14
3. Ephraim and Samaria (both representative of Israel), shall be held guilty and punished accordingly - Hosea 13:1-16

C. ISRAEL'S FUTURE RESTORATION (Hosea 14:1-9)

1. A call to return to the Lord, for Assyria will not save - Hosea 14:1-3
2. God promises to heal their backsliding and return them to the land - Hosea 14:4-7
3. Ephraim (Israel) will finally be cured of her idolatry - Hosea 14:8
4. A concluding call to wisely consider these things - Hosea 14:9

[God fulfilled His promise to restore Israel (and Judah) starting with the decree of Cyrus and under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah (cf. the books of Ezra and Nehemiah). As indicated in Hosea 14:8, Israel was once and for all cured of her idolatry. Her faith in God may have weakened later on, but idolatry never had the appeal it once had.

In the spirit of Hosea 14:9, which calls upon us to understand and know what is revealed in this book, here are some...]

II. CONCLUDING LESSONS TO BE DRAWN FROM HOSEA

A. GOD IS A GOD OF LOVE...

1. He loves His people
 - a. Like a man loves his wife (cf. Hosea and Gomer)
 - b. Like a father loves his child - Hosea 11:1
2. Because He loves His people...
 - a. He blesses them abundantly
 - b. He nurtures them patiently - Hosea 11:3-4

B. GOD IS A GOD OF HOLINESS...

1. He expects His people to know His will - Hosea 4:1-2; Hosea 4:6; Hosea 8:12
2. He expects His people to avoid harmful influences - Hosea 7:8-9
3. He expects His people to sow righteousness, not wickedness - Hosea 10:12-13

C. GOD IS A GOD OF JUSTICE...

1. He cannot let sin go unpunished - Hosea 9:9
2. Those who remain in sin He will devour - Hosea 13:7-8

D. GOD IS A GOD OF MERCY...

1. He calls upon His people to repent - Hosea 14:1
2. He will gladly heal those who do so - Hosea 14:4

CONCLUSION

1. Hosea presents a picture of God who is certainly desirous of redeeming those He loves
 - a. Sadly, not many took Hosea's message seriously
 - b. I.e., only a remnant of Israel returned after the restoration
2. Today, God's redeeming love is offered through His Son Jesus Christ - cf. Ep 1:3-7
 - a. Sadly, not many take the gospel message seriously either
 - b. Even as Jesus warned - cf. Mt 7:13-14; Mt 7:21-23

What many need to heed is the call of Hosea at the end of his book...

Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right; The righteous walk in them, But transgressors stumble in them. Hosea 14:9

Are we growing in our knowledge and walking in the ways of the LORD?

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Micah - Part 1 of 3 Judgment Now, Blessings Later (Micah 1:1 to 2:13)

INTRODUCTION

1. The eighth century (800-700 B.C.) was filled with prophetic activity...
 - a. Starting with Jonah, who prophesied to the city of Nineveh (790 B.C.)
 - b. Continuing with prophets sent primarily to the northern kingdom of Israel
 - 1) Amos (755 B.C.)
 - 2) Hosea (750-725 B.C.)
 - c. The southern kingdom of Judah was also the recipient of God's prophets
 - 1) Isaiah (740-700 B.C.)
 - 2) Micah (735-700 B.C.)
2. In our study of "The Minor Prophets"...
 - a. We have looked at the works of Jonah, Amos, and Hosea
 - b. We now come to the works of Micah, the last prophet of the eighth century B.C.

[Before we take a look at the messages of Micah as recorded in his book, it may be helpful to first look at some...]

I. BACKGROUND MATERIAL

A. MICAH - THE MAN...

1. His name means "Who is like Jehovah?" - cf. Micah 7:18
2. His home was Moresheth-Gath - Micah 1:1; Micah 1:14
 - a. In the lowlands of Judah, near Philistia
 - b. About 20-25 miles southwest of Jerusalem
3. Nothing is known of his occupation prior to becoming God's prophet
4. Characterization
 - a. "He was the prophet of the poor and downtrodden." (Homer Hailey)
 - b. "He had Amos' passion for justice and Hosea's heart for love." (J.M.P. Smith)
 - c. Comparing Micah to his contemporary Isaiah (as suggested by Hailey)
 - 1) Micah was a man of the fields, Isaiah was of the city
 - 2) Micah took little interest in politics, giving himself to the concern over spiritual and moral problems; Isaiah was in close contact with world affairs, the associate of kings and princes
 - 3) Both Micah and Isaiah...
 - a) Saw God as the infinite Ruler of nations and men
 - b) Recognized the absolute holiness and majesty of God
 - c) Stressed that violating principles of God's divine sovereignty and holiness would bring judgment and doom

B. MICAH - THE BOOK...

1. The date: 735-700 B.C.
 - a. During the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah - Micah 1:1

- b. Just as the northern kingdom of Israel was falling under Assyria's attack
- 2. The message: "Present Judgment, Future Blessings"
 - a. Judgment is coming because of Israel's unfaithfulness to God
 - b. Blessings will come because of God's faithfulness to Israel
 - 1) Cf. the promise God made to Abraham - Gen 22:18
 - 2) God would fulfill in the person of Jesus Christ - cf. Ac 3:24-26
- 3. A brief outline: The book appears to contain three messages or oracles, all beginning with the word "Hear"; therefore the book can be divided as follows:
 - a. In the first two chapters the coming judgment is discussed, along with a promise of restoration
 - b. God's condemnation of Israel, with a glimpse of the future hope - Micah 3:1-5:15
 - c. God's indictment of Israel, with a plea for repentance and promise of forgiveness - Micah 6:1-7:20

[In the remaining part of this lesson, let's take look at Micah's first message...]

II. THE COMING JUDGMENT AND PROMISED RESTORATION (Micah 1:1-2:13)

A. JUDGMENT PRONOUNCED ON ISRAEL AND JUDAH...

- 1. Micah's message is for both Samaria (Israel) and Jerusalem (Judah) - Micah 1:1
- 2. The Lord announces His coming judgment - Micah 1:2-5
- 3. The destruction of Samaria (representing the northern kingdom of Israel) - Micah 1:6-7
- 4. Micah's mourning - Micah 1:8-16
 - a. For the judgment has reached even Judah and Jerusalem
 - b. His lament involves making a play on words involving the names of cities; for example...
 - 1) "Tell it not in Gath" (Gath is similar to the Hebrew word for "tell")
 - 2) "Weep not at all in Beth Aphrah, Roll yourself in the dust" (Beth Aphrah means "house of dust")
 - 3) "Pass by in naked shame, you inhabitant of Shaphir" (Shaphir means "fair, beautiful, pleasant")
 - 4) "The inhabitant of Zaanan does not go out" (Zaanan means "come out")
 - 5) "Beth Ezel mourns; its place to stand is taken away from you" (Beth Ezel can be paraphrased as "nearby house")
 - c. As revealed in verse 16, their judgment will involve captivity

B. REASONS FOR THE INEVITABLE JUDGMENT...

- 1. The arrogance and violence of the nobles - Micah 2:1-5
 - a. For coveting fields and taking them by violence
 - b. So it will happen to them
- 2. For rejecting true prophets, and accepting false ones - Micah 2:6-11
 - a. They tell the prophets of God not to speak of God's words
 - b. They abuse the people of God
 - c. Destruction is coming, because they are defiled and accept false prophets

C. RESTORATION PROMISED...

- 1. It will involve God assembling a remnant - Micah 2:12
- 2. God will lead them like a flock of sheep, with a king at their head - Micah 2:12-13

CONCLUSION

1. Later, Micah will tell us more about the ultimate fulfillment of that restoration, and from where that "king" shall arise who shall lead God's flock! - cf. Micah 5:2-5

2. But for now we have seen that Micah certainly follows the pattern of God's prophets at that time...

- a. Proclaiming the coming judgment, which would involve captivity
- b. Providing the basis for such judgment, describing the nature of their sins and departure from God
- c. Promising that God would one day restore the good fortunes of Israel, but requiring repentance and involving a "remnant"

3. How sad that many in Israel and Judah did not heed the words of such men like Micah, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah...

- a. But are we heeding God's spokesmen for today?
- b. Such as His apostles Peter and Paul, and of course, His Son Jesus Christ?

We would do well to remember the preaching of Micah as we read in the New Testament...

"For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." (He 2:1-4)

Israel as a nation failed to heed the message sent to them; are we heeding the message for us today?

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Micah - Part 2 of 3 Judgment Now, Blessings Later (Micah 3:1-5:15)

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous lesson on the book of Micah...
 - a. We briefly considered some background material
 - 1) Concerning Micah, the man
 - a) His name means "Who is like Jehovah?"
 - b) He was from Moresheth-Gath, 20-25 miles SW of Jerusalem
 - c) A contemporary of Isaiah
 - d) A prophet of the poor and downtrodden
 - 2) Concerning Micah, the book
 - a) The prophecies occurred around 735-700 B.C.
 - b) They were directed toward both Israel and Judah
 - c) The general theme appears to be "Present Judgment, Future Blessings"
 - b. We briefly considered the first of three messages in the book
 - 1) Each message begins with "Hear..." - Micah 1:2; Mi 3:1; Mi 6:1
 - 2) The first message proclaimed "The Coming Judgment And Promised Restoration", as it described:
 - a) The judgment pronounced upon Israel and Judah - Micah 1:2-16
 - b) The reasons for the coming judgment - Micah 2:1-11
 - c) The promise of the restoration of a remnant - Micah 2:12-13
2. In this lesson, we shall consider Micah's second message...
 - a. As presented in Micah 3:1 to 5:15
 - b. Which follows a similar theme as in the previous message:
 - 1) God's condemnation of Israel
 - 2) With a glimpse of the future hope

[This second message has much more to say about the future hope, especially regarding the Messiah. But it begins with...]

I. GOD'S CONDEMNATION OF ISRAEL'S LEADERS

A. INDICTMENT OF ISRAEL'S CIVIL LEADERS...

1. The outrageous conduct of the rulers - Micah 3:1-3
 - a. They hate good and love evil
 - b. They consume the people (i.e., oppress them)
2. The judgment to come upon them - Micah 3:4
 - a. They will cry to the Lord, but He will not hear them
 - b. He will hide His face from them

B. INDICTMENT OF ISRAEL'S RELIGIOUS LEADERS...

1. The judgment to come upon the false prophets - Micah 3:5-7
 - a. Because they lead God's people astray

- b. They shall have no vision, they shall be made ashamed
- 2. Micah's own ministry, in contrast to that of the false prophets - Micah 3:8
 - a. He is full of the power of the Spirit, and of justice and might
 - b. He declares the transgression and sin of Israel

C. INDICTMENT OF ISRAEL'S LEADERS RENEWED...

- 1. Addressing once again the rulers of Israel, their sins are categorized - Micah 3:9-11
 - a. They abhor justice and pervert equity (fairness)
 - b. They build up Jerusalem with bloodshed and iniquity
 - c. Whether judges, priests, or prophets, they do it only for the money, belying their claim to trust in the Lord
- 2. The judgment to come upon Israel because of them - Micah 3:12
 - a. Zion shall be plowed like a field
 - b. Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins

[This prophecy of Micah was fulfilled when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B. C. (cf. 2 Chr 36:17-21). But his message is not finished; as ominous as it was in proclaiming the coming judgment, he now continues with a glimpse into the future...]

II. THE FUTURE EXALTATION OF ZION AND MESSIANIC HOPE

A. THE GLORY TO COME IN "THE LATTER DAYS"...

- 1. What will happen "in the latter days"
 - a. The "mountain of the Lord's house" will be established, and many people will want to go it - Micah 4:1-2
 - b. They will want to learn of God's ways, and the word of the Lord will go forth from Jerusalem - Micah 4:2
 - c. The Lord will judge the nations, and there will be peace - Micah 4:3
 - d. Everyone will be content, walking in the name of the Lord forever - Micah 4:4-5 -- Isaiah had a similar prophecy - Isa 2:1-4
- 2. What is the fulfillment of this prophecy?
 - a. We are inclined to believe there are past, present, and future elements
 - 1) It began in Jerusalem with the preaching of the gospel on Pentecost
 - a) For Peter identifies the events of that day as beginning the fulfillment of what would occur in the "last days" - cf. Joel 2:28-32; Ac 2:16-17
 - b) For Jesus said the gospel would go forth from Jerusalem as prophesied - Lk 24:46-47; cf. Micah 4:2; Isa 2:3
 - 2) It continues as people respond to the gospel that originated from Jerusalem
 - a) Such people "have come to Mount Zion" - He 12:22-24; cf. Micah 4:2
 - b) They learn the ways of the Lord - Ep 4:20-24; cf. Micah 4:2
 - 3) The "judging among many people" may be both present and future
 - a) The book of Revelation reveals the Lord as judging both in the present and in the future - cf. Rev 1:5; Rev 2:26-27; Micah 17:14; Micah 20:11-15
 - b) Peter viewed some of Isaiah's prophecies as yet to be fulfilled - 2 Pe 3:13; cf. Isa 65:17-19; Isaiah 66:22
 - c) Therefore Micah 4:3-5 may find some of its fulfillment in the eternal destiny of the redeemed, as part of the "New Jerusalem" of the "new heaven and new earth" described in Rev. chapters 21 & 22

3. As Micah continues, he describes what will occur "in that day" - Micah 4:6-8
a. The Lord will assemble a remnant of those whom He afflicted - cf. Ro 11:5
b. He will reign over them forever - cf. Lk 1:30-33 -- We understand that the fulfillment of this prophecy began with the first coming of Christ, and that the church is a spiritual kingdom in which the "former dominion" of Israel has been restored and given to Jesus who reigns from heaven - cf. Mt 28:18; Ac 1:6-8; 2:30-36; Re 1:5; Micah 2:26-27; Micah 3:21

B. THE DISTRESS AND CAPTIVITY BEFORE RESTORATION...

1. The "Now" of Micah 4:9 suggests that Micah has returned from his glimpse of the future hope to what will occur in the immediate present
2. Their judgment will involve distress like a woman in labor, as they will be delivered to Babylon, from which they will also be redeemed - Micah 4:9-10
3. Even "now", many nations (e.g., Assyria) have come up against them - Micah 4:11-13; Micah 5:1
a. Who seek to defile Zion, whom God will use to break them into many pieces
b. Yet the daughter of Zion (Israel) shall be humbled also - cf. Micah 5:1

C. THE COMING MESSIAH...

1. Here we find the prophecy of the Messiah's birthplace - Micah 5:2; cf. Mt 2:1-6
a. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah
b. He would become the ruler of Israel - cf. Isa 9:6-7; Lk 1:30-33
c. His "goings forth have been from old, from everlasting" - cf. Jn 1:1-3
2. The Messiah will lead His people in peace - Micah 5:3-5a
a. Though first they must be given up for a short time (Babylonian captivity)
b. Then a remnant shall return, whom the Ruler shall feed in the strength of the Lord

D. FURTHER JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL AND HER ENEMIES...

1. Some take this section to be Messianic
2. I tend to take it as pertaining to Micah's day and those that followed shortly after...
a. The Assyrian threat would prove to be no real threat (for Judah - Micah 5:5-6b cf. Isaiah chapters 36 & 37
b. When the remnant is dispersed (as a result of Babylonian captivity), they shall be a lion among flocks of sheep - Micah 5:7-9 (e.g., Daniel, Esther?)
c. God would cut off her false strengths (such as horses and chariots, cf. Isa 31:1) and her idolatry - Micah 5:10-15

CONCLUSION

1. With the recurrent theme in his messages ("Present Judgment, Future Blessings"), Micah's purpose appears to be two-fold...
a. To warn the people, that they may repent as necessary
b. To encourage the people, that their hope for the future might help them to endure the hard times to come
2. A similar two-fold message is found in the New Testament as well...
a. Warnings to persevere, lest we fall away - e.g., He 4:1; Heb4:11
b. Promises to encourage us for whatever lies ahead - e.g., 2 Peter 3:13-14
3. Today, we have an advantage over the Israelites of Micah's day...

- a. We have already seen much of his prophecy fulfilled with the first coming of the Messiah
 - b. As Peter wrote, "we also have the prophetic word made more sure" - 2 Pe 1:19
 - c. Made more sure by virtue of its fulfillment, it can serve to comfort us and strengthen our hope regarding any future promise of God - cf. Ro 15:4
- If God kept His promise concerning the first coming of His Messiah, we can have confidence He will keep His promise concerning His return!

Perhaps that is why Peter went on to say concerning "the prophetic word" (e.g., The Minor Prophets)...

"which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Pe 1:19)

By careful study and consideration of the prophets, both in the Old Testament and New Testament, our hope for the future is strengthened!

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Micah – Part 3 of 3 Judgment Now, Blessings Later (Micah 6:1-7:20)

INTRODUCTION

1. This is the third of three lessons in our survey of the book of Micah...
 - a. Micah was a prophet of God, a contemporary of Isaiah (ca. 735-700 B.C.)
 - b. His prophecies were directed to both Israel and Judah, though mostly to the latter
 - c. His general theme: "Present Judgment, Future Blessings"
2. In his first message...
 - a. He proclaimed "The Coming Judgment And Promised Restoration"
 - b. In which he described:
 - 1) The judgment pronounced upon Israel and Judah - Mic 1:2-16
 - 2) The reasons for the coming judgment - Mic 2:1-11
 - 3) The promise of the restoration of a remnant - Mic 2:12-13
3. In his second message...
 - a. He proclaimed "God's Condemnation of Israel, And The Future Hope"
 - b. In which he described:
 - 1) God's condemnation of Israel's civil and religious leaders - Mic 3:1-12
 - 2) The future exaltation of Zion and Messianic hope - Mic 4:1-5:15
4. In his third and final message, Micah's message is "God's Indictment of Israel, With A Promise Of Forgiveness And Restoration" - Mic 6:1 thru 7:20

[Similar to what we saw in Hosea, the prophet Micah presents the Lord's complaint as though He were taking Israel to court.]

I. THE LORD'S CONTROVERSY WITH ISRAEL

A. GOD'S COMPLAINT...

1. The people called to present their case against God, as He has a complaint against them- Mic 6:1-2
2. How has the Lord wearied them? Testify against Him! - Mic 6:3
3. Did He not redeem them from Egyptian bondage with the aid of His servants Moses, Aaron, and Miriam? - Mic 6:4
4. Remember how He even had Balaam counter the counsel of Balak - Mic 6:5

B. WHAT THE LORD REQUIRED OF THEM...

1. What must they offer for their sins? - Mic 6:6-7
2. What God wanted was for them to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before Him - Mic 6:8

C. THE PUNISHMENT FOR ISRAEL'S INJUSTICE...

1. Justified, for they were full of dishonesty and violence - Mic 6:9-12

2. Judgment is coming in the form of desolation, for they hold on to the idolatry of Omri and works of Ahab - Mic 6:13-16

[Once again, for the third time, Micah has foretold of the judgment to come. As before, he does not close without offering a hope for blessings in the future.]

II. A LAMENT FOLLOWED BY A PROMISE OF RESTORATION

A. PERHAPS SPEAKING FOR THE FAITHFUL REMNANT, MICAH LAMENTS...

1. His sorrow because the faithful man had perished - Mic 7:1-4
2. Things are so bad, only the Lord can be trusted - Mic 7:5-7

B. A CONFESSION OF SIN, WITH COMFORT IN WHAT THE LORD WILL BRING...

1. His enemy is not to rejoice over him - Mic 7:8-10a
 - a. For though he may fall, he will arise; the Lord will be a light to him
 - b. He is willing to bear the indignation of the Lord, for he has sinned; he knows also that the Lord will eventually plead his case and execute justice for him
2. He takes comfort in the future restoration of Zion - Mic 7:10b-13
 - a. Though first to be trampled down like mire in the streets
 - b. When restored, all will come to her (a messianic reference akin to Mic 4:1-2?)
 - c. But first there will be desolation (cf. the destruction of the city by Babylon)

C. A CLOSING PRAYER, WITH PRAISE TO GOD...

1. A prayer for God's protection, to shepherd them as in days gone by - Mic 7:14
2. God answer: "I will show them marvelous things" - Mic 7:15
3. Micah's song of praise - Mic 7:16-20
 - a. The nations shall be made afraid when they see what the Lord has done
 - b. Who is a God like Jehovah?
 - 1) Who pardons iniquity
 - 2) Who passes over the transgressions of the remnant of His heritage
 - 3) Who does not retain anger forever, for He delights in mercy
 - 4) Who will again have compassion, subdue their sins, and cast their sins away
 - 5) Who will give truth and mercy to Jacob and Abraham (i.e., their descendants) as He has sworn from days of old cf. Gen 12:2-3

CONCLUSION

1. Thus Micah ends his book like he ended each of his three messages: offering hope concerning the future for the people of Israel
2. In our previous lesson we noted how these promises concerning a glorious future to a great extent were fulfilled "in the latter days", beginning with the coming of our Lord
 - a. Certainly the restoration and rebuilding of temple following Babylonian captivity was a partial fulfillment
 - b. But even that was just a glimpse of what Jesus Christ would offer in His spiritual kingdom
3. From Micah, we can learn a lot about...
 - a. The nature of God - cf. Mic 7:18-20

b. How God would have us live - cf. Mic 6:6-8

4. We also can have our faith strengthened by observing those prophecies which have been fulfilled...

a. Such as the birthplace of the Messiah - Mic 5:2

b. Such as the establishment of the Lord's house - Mic 4:1-2

So while Micah may have been sent first to the nation of Israel, let's not forget what Peter said concerning the Old Testament prophets...

"To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven; things which angels desire to look into." (1 Pe 1:12)

Yes, when the prophets like Micah foretold of the "the glories that would follow", they were serving us who would be later be in the kingdom of God. Do we appreciate how blessed we are? If so, then let's also do what God requires of us, as expressed in Micah's own words:

"to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic 6:8)

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Nahum The Fall Of Nineveh

INTRODUCTION

1. At the same time Jeremiah and Zephaniah were pronouncing judgment against Judah, another prophet was directing his attention at one of her enemies
2. The prophet was Nahum, whose name means "Consolation"
 - a. The name "is in a sense symbolical of the message of the book, which was intended to comfort the oppressed and afflicted people of Judah" (Eiselen)
 - b. Concerning the MAN
 - 1) His home was Elkosh, of which little is known - Nah 1:1
 - 2) Some think that Capernaum (lit., "village of Nahum") may have been his birthplace
 - 3) He was contemporary with Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah
 - c. Concerning his MESSAGE
 - 1) His message is usually dated around 630-612 B.C.
 - a) The northern kingdom of Israel was already in Assyrian captivity
 - b) Assyria itself was still a world power, though in a state of decline
 - 2) The theme of his message is simple: "The Fall Of Nineveh"
 - a) This makes his work a complement to that of Jonah
 - b) Though by this time no mercy would be shown, judgment would be final

[The book of Nahum can easily be divided into three sections which coincide with the three chapters. In the first section we find...]

I. NINEVEH'S DOOM DECLARED

A. THE CHARACTER AND POWER OF THE LORD...

1. God's vengeance, even though He is slow to anger - Nah 1:1-3a
2. The fierceness of His anger described - Nah 1:3-6
3. The goodness of the Lord, as a stronghold to the faithful - Nah 1:7
4. The pursuer of His enemies - Nah 1:8

B. THE COMPLETE OVERTHROW OF NINEVEH...

1. She will not afflict again, despite her plotting against the Lord - Nah 1:9-11
2. Judah will be delivered from Nineveh's affliction - Nah 1:12-13
3. Nineveh's destruction has been commanded by the Lord - Nah 1:14
4. There shall be good tidings in Judah, she can keep her feasts - Nah 1:15

[Having "declared" Nineveh's doom in the first section, we now find...]

II. NINEVEH'S DOOM DESCRIBED

A. THE SIEGE AND CAPTURE OF THE CITY...

1. Furious preparation for the battle is described - Nah 2:1-4

2. Resistance is futile, captivity has been decreed - Nah 2:5-7
 - a. Note verse 6: "The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved"
 - b. "The Babylonian Chronicle tells that Nineveh fell because the flooding rivers made breaches in the city's defenses." (Believers' Study Bible)

B. THE UTTER SACK OF THE CITY...

1. Her inhabitants flee, the city is plundered - Nah 2:8-10
2. Her destruction will be complete, Nineveh as a dwelling of devouring lions will be no more - Nah 2:11-13

[Thus far, Nineveh's doom has been "declared" and "described" by Nahum. In the third and final section, we find him saying...]

III. NINEVEH'S DOOM DESERVED

A. BECAUSE OF HER SINS...

1. Her woe will be due to her sins - Nah 3:1-4
2. The Lord will uncover her shame and make her a spectacle - Nah 3:5-7

B. SHE IS NO BETTER THAN NO-AMON...

1. Nineveh is no better than No-Amon (Thebes in Egypt) - Nah 3:8
2. Who despite her strength, was carried away into captivity - Nah 3:9-10
3. So it will be with Nineveh - Nah 3:11

C. HER STRENGTH AND WEALTH WILL NOT SAVE HER...

1. Her strongholds will fail - Nah 3:12-13
2. All her efforts, her wealth, her army, will be futile - Nah 3:14-17

D. HER END HAS COME...

1. Her leaders are dead, her people scattered - Nah 3:18-19a
2. Those who hear of her fall will rejoice - Nah 3:19b

CONCLUSION

1. The message of Nahum for the people of God is one of consolation...
 - a. That those who afflict God's people will be judged - Nah 1:2-3; cf. Lk 18:7-8
 - b. That God is a stronghold in time of trouble - Nah 1:7; cf. Ps 27:5 -- Are you trusting in God as your Stronghold?
2. The message of Nahum for those who do evil is one of warning...
 - a. Don't rely on what mercy was shown to your ancestors (e.g., as in the days of Jonah)
 - b. The Lord may be merciful and slow to anger, but the day of judgment does finally come!
-- Are you trusting in what your parents or ancestors may have done, to escape the judgment of God?

This message of Nahum is reminiscent of the words of Paul:

"Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off." (Ro 11:22)

Let us be sure to "continue in His goodness", lest we too experience the "severity of God"!

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Zephaniah Through Judgment To Blessing

INTRODUCTION

1. In our survey of "The Minor Prophets" we now come to the first of three prophets who preached to Judah alone, following the downfall of the northern kingdom of Israel
2. The prophet is Zephaniah, whose name means "Jehovah Hides"
 - a. Concerning the MAN
 - 1) King Hezekiah was his great-great-grandfather - Zeph 1:1
 - 2) This has prompted some to call him "the royal prophet"
 - 3) He was contemporary with Jeremiah, as were Nahum and Habakkuk
 - b. Concerning his MESSAGE
 - 1) Zephaniah prophesied in the days of Josiah, king of Judah
 - a) Josiah ruled from 640-609 B.C.
 - b) He was a good king, a great reformer - 2 Chr 34:1-3, 2 Chr 34:29-34; 2 Chr 35:1-19
 - c) Josiah's reforms were short-lived, however, and the nation soon abandoned their faith after his death
 - 2) Zephaniah proclaimed the coming "day of the Lord" - cf. Zeph 1:7; Zeph 1:14-16
 - a) So vivid are his descriptions that George Adam Smith wrote: "No hotter book lies in all the Old Testament."
 - b) And yet it ends on an encouraging note concerning the future -- Therefore its overall message is: "Through Judgment To Blessing"

[As we get into the book, we note that it can be divided into three sections. The first section encouraged the people to "look within"]

I. GOD'S WRATH COMING UPON JUDAH

A. THE LORD IS BRINGING JUDGMENT!

1. The prophet announces a universal and all-consuming judgment - Zeph 1:1-3
2. With special mention and attention given Judah - Zeph 1:4-6

B. THE "DAY OF THE LORD" IS AT HAND!

1. This "day" as it will affect Judah and Jerusalem - Zeph 1:7-13
 - a. Punishment upon the princes and king's children (note, the king himself is not mentioned), and upon those who are full of violence and deceit
 - b. There will be wailing and mourning in the city of Jerusalem
 - c. The Lord will search out and punish the complacent
2. This great "day" described - Zeph 1:14-18
 - a. A day that is near and hastens quickly
 - b. A day of devastation, desolation, darkness, and distress
 - c. A day in which silver and gold cannot deliver one from the Lord's wrath

C. AND SO - A CALL FOR THE NATION TO REPENT!

1. Before the day of the Lord's anger comes upon them - Zeph 2:1-2
2. To seek the Lord, to seek righteousness, to seek humility - Zeph 2:3

[Having encouraged the people to "look within" and see the need for their own repentance, Zephaniah now prompts the people to "look around" to see...]

II. GOD'S WRATH COMING UPON SURROUNDING NATIONS

A. GOD'S JUDGMENT ON NATIONS EAST AND WEST...

1. Philistia - Zeph 2:4-7
 - a. Its cities will be made desolate, the inhabitants destroyed
 - b. The land will be for the remnant of Judah, whose captivity God will restore
2. Moab & Ammon - Zeph 2:8-11
 - a. They shall be like Sodom and Gomorrah
 - b. Because of their pride, and for their mocking reproach of God's people
 - c. And God will one day be worshipped by people from all nations

B. GOD'S JUDGMENT ON NATIONS SOUTH AND NORTH...

1. Ethiopia will be slain by the sword - Zeph 2:12
2. Assyria with its capital Nineveh will become desolate - Zeph 2:13-15

C. AND SO - WOE TO JERUSALEM...

1. She has rebelled against the Lord - Zeph 3:1-5
 - a. She has not obeyed His voice nor drawn near to Him
 - b. Her civil and religious leaders are like lions and wolves, insolent and doing violence to the Law
 - c. The unjust knows no shame; the Lord, however, is righteous and never fails in His justice
2. She has ignored God's judgment upon other nations - Zeph 3:6-7
 - a. Which should have prompted her to receive God's instruction
 - b. But instead the people corrupted all their deeds

[Finally, lest the faithful remnant despair, Zephaniah ends his message with a "look beyond"...]

III. THROUGH JUDGMENT TO BLESSING

A. WAIT UPON THE LORD...

1. The faithful are told to wait for Lord to carry out His judgment - Zeph 3:8
2. Even as Micah said he would do - cf. Mic 7:7-9

B. GOD WILL RESTORE HIS PEOPLE...

1. After His judgment, God will restore to the peoples (Gentiles?) a "pure language" to worship and serve Him in one accord - Zeph 3:9
2. His dispersed ones (Israel?) shall bring offerings from afar - Zeph 3:10
3. God will remove the proud from His "holy mountain", leaving a meek and humble people who will trust and rest in the Lord - Zeph 3:11-13

C. AND SO - THERE WILL BE JOY IN JERUSALEM...

1. For the Lord will remove their judgments and their enemies - Zeph 3:14-15
2. For the Lord will be in their midst, providing them with gladness, love and singing - Zeph 3:16-17

3. For the Lord has given them great assurance - Zeph 3:18-20
 - a. God will gather those who sorrow over the reproach of His people
 - b. God will deal with those who afflicted His people
 - c. God will gather those who have been driven out, and give them fame and praise

CONCLUSION

1. The message of Zephaniah is a simple one: Judgment is coming, but blessings will follow for those who heed the warning to repent
 - a. It was a message that would later comfort the remnant taken away into Babylonian captivity
 - b. It was a message that perhaps had an initial fulfillment following their restoration under Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah
 - c. But I believe the ultimate fulfillment pertains to the age of the Messiah
 - 1) Which began with the establishment of His spiritual kingdom, the church
 - a) Into which God is "gathering" His people - cf. 1 Th 2:12
 - b) In which we enjoy the presence of God and His blessings - cf. He 12:22-24
 - 2) Which will be culminated when Jesus comes again - Re 21:1-22:5
2. The message of the apostles is not really much different today...
 - a. The "day of the Lord" (of which Zephaniah's "day" was a type) is coming - 2 Pe 3:7-10
 - b. God's people (i.e., the church) are admonished to remain faithful - 2 Pe 3:11-14

Are we heeding that message? For those willing to listen, here is what else Peter had to say...

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. (Ac 3:19-21)

Be converted through your obedience to the gospel of Christ (cf. Mk 16:15-16; Ac 2:38), and you too can "look beyond" the coming judgment for the blessings to follow!

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Habakkuk

From A Sob To A Song

INTRODUCTION

1. We have seen that during the O.T. period known as "Judah Alone"...
 - a. Zephaniah was prophesying to Judah
 - b. Nahum was pronouncing God's judgment upon Nineveh

2. Then there was Habakkuk, a prophet filled with troubling questions
 - a. Concerning his NAME
 - 1) It means "Embrace"
 - 2) "His name, as Luther well puts it, speaks as one who took his nation to his heart, comforted it and held it up, as one embraces and presses to his bosom a poor weeping child, calming and consoling it with good hope." (Geikie)
 - b. Concerning the DATE
 - 1) Around 612-606 B.C.
 - 2) Just as Babylon was making her westward move toward world conquest
 - c. Concerning his MESSAGE: the book easily falls into three sections
 - 1) A "burden" - Hab - 1:1 thru 2:1
 - 2) A "vision" - Hab - The rest of chapter 2
 - 3) A "prayer" - Hab - All of chapter 3

3. We note an immediate difference between Habakkuk and other prophets...
 - a. Instead of taking the Lord's message directly to the people (as do most prophets)
 - b. He takes the complaint of the people directly to the Lord, representing them in the complaint -- As he does so, it has been said that Habakkuk goes "From A Sob To A Song"

[This process begins with a "burden" as found in the first section of his message...]

I. HIS BURDEN: FAITH GRAPPLING WITH A PROBLEM

A. THE PROPHET RAISES A QUESTION...

1. He laments over apparent rule of wickedness and violence
2. How can the Lord justify His apparent indifference to such things? - Hab 1:1-4

B. GOD'S ANSWER...

1. He is not indifferent!
2. He is doing something that will be hard to fathom - Hab 1:5-11
 - a. Raising up the Chaldeans (Babylon) to execute His judgment
 - b. Using a violent nation that arrogantly thinks it is serving its own god (and purpose)

C. THE PROPHET'S SECOND QUESTION...

1. How can a holy God employ such an impure and godless agent? - Hab 1:12-17

2. This is hard for Habakkuk to understand, but he will watch to see what the Lord will say to him - Hab 2:1

[Indeed, it is a heavy "burden" for Habakkuk. God has answered his first question by saying He will use the Chaldeans to punish the wickedness and violence in Judah. But the Chaldeans are wicked also, how can God use them? Habakkuk receives his answer in the form of a "vision"....]

II. HIS VISION: FAITH GRASPING THE SOLUTION

A. GOD'S ANSWER: FIRST, THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH...

1. Habakkuk is to write what God reveals to him - Hab 2:2-3
2. The proud is not upright; but the just shall live by his faith - Hab 2:4

B. GOD'S ANSWER: SECOND, GOD WILL JUDGE THE PROUD...

1. Woe to the proud possessed with the lust of conquest and plunder - Hab 2:5-8
2. Woe to their efforts to build a permanent empire through cruelty and godless gain - Hab 2:9-11
3. Woe to those who build cities with bloodshed - Hab 2:12-14
4. Woe to those with cruelty in their treatment of those they conquered - Hab 2:15-17
5. Woe to those given over to idolatry - Hab 2:18-20
 - a. Who worship that in which there is no breath at all
 - b. While the Lord is in His holy temple, before whom the earth should keep silence

[The answer to Habakkuk's second question appears to be this: While God may use a wicked nation like Babylon to punish the wickedness of Judah, He will not let Babylon's wickedness go unpunished either! In the meantime, the just (righteous) person will live by his faith in God, which Habakkuk illustrates with his "prayer"....]

III. HIS "PRAYER": FAITH GLORYING IN ASSURANCE

A. PETITION FOR GOD'S ACTION AND MERCY...

1. Written in the form of a psalm - Hab 3:1, Hab 3:19c
2. Asking God to revive His works, and in His wrath remember mercy - Hab 3:2

B. PRAISE FOR GOD'S PAST DELIVERANCE...

1. His mighty works in the past - Hab 3:3-7
2. Bringing both judgment to the wicked and salvation to His people - Hab 3:8-15

C. PROFESSION OF FAITH...

1. He trembled at what he has heard, that he will have rest in the day of trouble - Hab 3:16
2. But he expresses his faith, that while trouble may come he will rejoice in the Lord who will be his strength - Hab 3:17-19 -- Here we find one of the greatest expressions of faith found anywhere!

CONCLUSION

1. What lessons can we glean from this short book? (as suggested by Homer Hailey)
 - a. The universal supremacy of God's judgment upon the wicked
 - 1) God would use Chaldea to punish wicked Judah
 - 2) Then Chaldea would be destroyed for its own wickedness

b. Evil is self-destructive

- 1) If the righteous can be patient, trusting in the Lord
- 2) The tyranny and arrogance of the wicked will eventually fall

c. The fact of divine discipline

- 1) In Job it is shown in the suffering of the individual
- 2) In Habakkuk it is shown in the suffering of the nation -- In both cases, suffering is disciplinary

2. Perhaps the most important lesson concerns the value of "faith"...

a. By it the righteous in Habakkuk's day would live

b. Even more so today!

- 1) In receiving salvation - Ro 1:16-17
- 2) In persevering - He 10:35-39 -- Notice that both quote from Hab 2:4

But our faith must not be a shallow faith; it must be like that expressed by Habakkuk...

"Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls;"

"Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills." -- Habakkuk 3:17-19

Is this our kind of faith?

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Haggai

Build The Temple!

INTRODUCTION

1. In our survey of "The Minor Prophets", we now jump ahead about 100 years...
 - a. Prophets like Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakkuk prophesied shortly before the seventy years of Babylonian captivity (i.e. before 606-536 B.C.)
 - b. Following the return under the leadership of Zerubbabel (536 BC), it was not long before two more prophets were sent to the people of Israel
2. These prophets were Haggai and Zechariah. We shall consider Haggai in this lesson...
 - a. Concerning the MAN
 - 1) His name means "Festival" or "Festive"
 - 2) What we know of Haggai is limited to his book and references in Ezra (see below)
 - 3) Together with Zechariah he motivated the Jews in rebuilding the temple
 - b. Concerning the MESSAGE
 - 1) It is commonly dated around 520 B.C. (the second year of King Darius - Hag 1:1)
 - a) For the foundation of the temple had been laid shortly after the arrival under the leadership of Zerubbabel (i.e., 536 B.C.) - cf. Ezra 3:8-13
 - b) Yet opposition to rebuilding the temple stopped it for 16 years - Ezra 4:1-24
 - c) God then raised up Haggai and Zechariah - Ezra 5:1-2; Ezra 6:14
 - 2) The theme of Haggai's preaching: Build The Temple!
 - a) His message contains four separate proclamations
 - b) All within four months - cf. Hag 1:1; Hag 2:1; Hag 1:10; Hag 1:20

[As we outline and briefly consider the message of Haggai, we begin by noticing...]

I. A WORD OF REPROOF

A. BUILDING THE TEMPLE IS LONG OVERDUE...

1. Haggai takes the Lord's message to Israel's leaders - Hag 1:1
 - a. Zerubbabel the governor (who lead the first group of exiles back home)
 - b. Joshua the high priest (also known as Jeshua, Ezra 2:1-2, Ezra 2:36; Ezra 2:40; Hag 3:2-8)
2. The Lord takes issue with what the people have been saying - Hag 1:2-4
 - a. They have been saying the time is not right to build the temple
 - b. The Lord challenged them as to whether they should live in paneled houses while the temple lies in ruins

B. THE PEOPLE SHOULD CONSIDER THEIR WAYS...

1. The Lord challenged them to consider what was happening - Hag 1:5-6
 - a. Their efforts were much
 - b. But they received little in return
2. To motivate them in building the temple, their trouble is explained - Hag 1:7-11
 - a. They needed to build the temple and thereby glorify God

b. For their efforts to obtain much for themselves was frustrated by God

- 1) They looked for much, but God blew it away
- 2) While His house lay in ruins, they were busy building their own
- 3) Therefore God had called for a drought on the land and its fruit

C. THE TESTIMONY OF THE PROPHET IS HEEDED...

1. With the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua the people finally obeyed - Hag 1:12
2. The Lord promises to be with them - Hag 1:13
3. Stirred up by the Lord, Zerubbabel and Joshua lead the remnant to resume work on the temple - Hag 1:14-15

[From Hag 1:1, Hag 1:15, we can determine that it took 24 days for the people to begin rebuilding the temple. About a month later (cf. Hag 2:1), another message from the Lord comes by way of Haggai. This message is...]

II. A WORD OF SUPPORT

A. ARE THE PEOPLE DISCOURAGED?

1. Haggai is sent again to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the faithful remnant - Hag 2:1-2
2. Those who had seen the former temple in its glory are asked if the present temple appears as nothing in comparison - Hag 2:3 -- The new temple evidently did not compare with the temple built by Solomon

B. THE LORD PROVIDES A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT...

1. The Lord encourages them to be strong, for He is with them - Hag 2:4-5
2. The Lord promises to make the glory of this temple greater - Hag 2:6-9
 - a. By shaking the nations and having them come to "the Desire of All Nations"
 - 1) This can be translated "the desired of all nations will come", perhaps speaking of the nations bringing their wealth to the temple - cf. Hag 2:8 ; Isa 60:5
 - 2) Many see a Messianic reference in this phrase, though no reference is so made in the New Testament (He 12:26-27 does make an allusion to verse 6)
 - b. By giving peace "in this place"
 - 1) Some see another Messianic reference in this phrase
 - 2) Certainly Jesus as the Prince of Peace, came to the temple

[With such a word of encouragement, the people would continue with their task of rebuilding the temple. But all was not well in the eyes of the Lord; He needed Haggai once again to prophesy to the people, so two months later (cf. Hag 2:1, Hag 1:10) comes...

III. A WORD OF EXPLANATION

A. THE PEOPLE ARE OFFERING A WORK THAT IS UNCLEAR...

1. Through two questions, the Lord challenges the priests to think - Hag 2:10-13
 - a. Can holiness be transferred through casual contact? - No
 - b. Can defilement be transferred through casual contact? - Yes
2. Well, the people are unclean, and what they therefore offer is unclean! - Hag 2:14
 - a. Unclean people can't build a holy temple
 - b. Therefore, their offering is unclean!

B. ONCE AGAIN THE PEOPLE ARE ASKED TO CONSIDER...

1. First, begin considering what God has done in the past - Hag 2:15-17
 - a. Before the stone was laid in the temple, things were scarce
 - b. The Lord even brought blight, mildew and hail to frustrate their labors, but they did not heed

Him

2. Now, begin considering what God is promising to do - Hag 2:18-19
 - a. Begin considering that very day (24th day of the ninth month)
 - 1) Consider what has occurred from the day the temple's foundation was laid
 - 2) Is there seed in the barn? (no) Nor has the produce yielded its fruit
 - d. But beginning that very day (24th day of the ninth month), God was going to bless them!

[With such a promise, they would likely repent and build the temple as they should. To encourage them further, Haggai has one last message...]

IV. A WORD OF PROMISE

A. GOD WILL OVERTHROW THE KINGDOMS OF THE NATIONS...

1. This message came at the same time as the third message - Hag 2:20
 - a. On the 24th day of the ninth month, of the second year of Darius
 - b. Nearly four months after the first message - cf. Hag 1:1
2. Directed to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah - Hag 2:21-22
 - a. God proclaims He will shake heaven and earth
 - b. He will overthrow the kingdoms of the Gentiles
 - c. This He will do, "everyone by the sword of his brother" -- Note: Just as He did before, using Assyria to punish Israel, Babylon to punish Assyria, Medo-Persia to punish Babylon, etc.

B. GOD'S SPECIAL PROMISE TO ZERUBBABEL...

1. In the same day that God will overthrow the nations - Hag 2:23a
2. God will make Zerubbabel as a signet ring, for God has chosen him - Hag 2:23b
 - a. Many see a Messianic reference in this promise
 - 1) For God calls Zerubbabel "My servant", an expression often used in Isaiah in reference to the Messiah - cf. Isa 52:13; Isa 53:11
 - 2) And God says "for I have chosen you" (Messiah means anointed, chosen)
 - b. That as governor of Judah and descendant of David, Zerubbabel represents the Messianic hope that has been renewed and would be ultimately fulfilled with the coming of Jesus! -- Note: With His exaltation to the right hand of God, Jesus began to rule the nations "with a rod of iron", as Revelation vividly depicts - Re 1:5; Rev 2:26-27; Rev 3:21; Rev 17:14

CONCLUSION

1. Haggai's message was primarily designed to encourage Zerubbabel and the faithful remnant of Israel who had returned from Babylonian captivity...

- a. To finish rebuilding the temple
- b. To do so in a manner that would honor and glorify God
- c. To look to the future with hope and promise

2. Like other books of the Old Testament...

- a. Haggai was "written for our learning" - Ro 15:4
 - b. There are lessons that can easily be gleaned from this book, such as:
 - 1) The importance of putting God first - Hag 1:2-4
 - 2) The need for every one to work, not just the leaders - Hag 1:12-15
 - 3) The danger of letting evil contaminate our efforts to serve God - Hag 2:11-14
3. As Christians, we are blessed to be "a holy temple in the Lord" - Ep 2:19-22; cf. 1 Pe 2:5
- a. The foundation of this temple has been laid
 - b. But the need for building upon the foundation continues!

Living in a highly materialistic society, it may be easy for us to neglect the ongoing construction of the Lord's house. Perhaps we need to remember the words of the Lord through Haggai:

"Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" (Hag 1:4)

If we are indeed guilty of neglecting the Lord's house, then heed also these words of Haggai:
"Consider your ways!"

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Malachi - My Messenger (Part 1 of 2) (Malachi 1:1 thru Malachi 2:16)

INTRODUCTION

1. With the aid of the prophetic ministries of Haggai and Zechariah...
 - a. The temple was rebuilt - Ezra 5:1-2; Ezra 6:14-16
 - b. What had begun in 536 B.C. was finally finished in 516 B.C.
2. In 458 B.C., another group of exiles returned to Jerusalem, led by Ezra...
 - a. A priest
 - b. His work was to teach the people the word of God - Ezra 7:10
3. About 444 B.C., a third group of exiles returned led by Nehemiah...
 - a. Who became governor
 - b. Under his leadership, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt (Neh chapters 1-6)
 - c. He, with Ezra, led the people to a great revival (Neh chapters 7-13)
4. Contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah was another prophet, Malachi...
 - a. His name means "My Messenger"
 - 1) Certainly Malachi was a messenger of God
 - 2) But he also spoke of God's messengers to come - Mal 3:1
 - b. Like Ezra the priest...
 - 1) Malachi attacked the spiritual and moral decay that was prevalent
 - 2) Among both priests and people
 - c. In so doing, he resorted to a new style of teaching
 - 1) Known as the didactic-dialectic method of speaking
 - 2) I.e., making a charge, raising potential objections, and then refuting them
 - 3) Which later became common in Jewish schools and synagogues

[In this study, we shall consider several examples of this style of teaching as we survey the first two chapters. In these chapters we find Malachi addressing several problems...]

I. THEY WERE DOUBTING GOD'S LOVE

A. EVIDENTLY THEY WERE QUESTIONING GOD'S LOVE FOR THEM...

1. After years of captivity, one might understand why they felt this way
2. Their return from Babylonian captivity was not without difficulty

B. GOD REASSERTS HIS LOVE FOR ISRAEL...

1. Note the didactic-dialectic style - Mal 1:2
 - a. "I have loved you"
 - b. "In what way have You loved us?"
 - c. "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated"
2. God is speaking of Jacob and Esau as the representative of their descendant nations; God did not hate Esau personally, but did hate what Edom as a nation had become

3. He goes on to illustrate what He means
 - a. Edom (the descendants of Esau) had become desolate; despite their claims to the country, it would remain desolate - Mal 1:3-4
 - b. But Israel would one day see the Lord magnified beyond its border - Mal 1:5

[If the people only observed how Israel was being restored while Edom remained desolate, they would know God still loved them as a nation. But perhaps their doubting of God's love had led to another problem that was prevalent at that time...]

II. THEY WERE DISHONORING GOD'S NAME

A. BY OFFERING BLEMISHED SACRIFICES - Mal 1:6-11

1. Sons honor their fathers, and servants their masters; but they were despising God
2. When asked in what way, they are told of their defiled sacrifices
3. They were offering to God what they would be embarrassed to offer men
4. The Lord would even wish that someone shut the doors so they could not sacrifice
5. Despite their dishonor, one day God's name would be great even among the Gentiles

B. BY OFFERING HALF-HEARTED WORSHIP - Mal 1:12-14

1. They also were profaning God's name by saying His service is contemptible and a weariness
2. Those who continued to bring blemished sacrifices would fall under God's curse, for He is "a great King"

C. SUCH CORRUPTION WOULD NOT GO UNANSWERED - Mal 2:1-9

1. Addressing the priests directly, the nature of God's curse is graphically depicted
2. Because they had failed to live up to what was expected of God's priests, He will make them base and contemptible

[As Malachi continues, we also learn...]

III. THEY WERE PROFANING GOD'S COVENANT

A. BY MARRYING HEATHEN WOMEN - Mal 2:10-12

1. They were dealing treacherously and profaning the covenant made with their fathers by marrying pagan women ("the daughter of a foreign God")
2. The nature of this problem is described in Ezra chapters 9-10; Neh 13:23-24
3. Malachi prays that the Lord will cut off from Jacob those who do this - Mal 2:12; cf. Eze 10:7-8; Neh 13:23-28

B. BY DIVORCING THEIR JEWISH WIVES - Mal 2:13-16

1. Despite their weeping, God was no longer regarding their sacrifices - cf. 1 Pe 3:8
2. For they had dealt treacherously with the wives of their youth (i.e., Jewish wives) by divorcing them
 - a. Even though they had entered into a covenant (e.g., "Till death do us part")
 - b. Even though God had made them one (cf. Gen 2:24)

CONCLUSION

1. Israel was showing signs of spiritual and moral decay...
 - a. Failing to appreciate God's love for them
 - b. Dishonoring God by offering second-best and half-hearted worship
 - c. Profaning God's covenant by disregarding it and their wives

2. These versus are quite relevant for Christians today...
 - a. As spiritual priests we are to offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Pe 2:9; Ro 12:1-2)
 - b. Is our service honoring God? Or do we:
 - 1) Dishonor God by offering less than our best and with half-hearted service?
 - 2) Dishonor Him by offering only weak, unenthusiastic service, refusing to actively participate; If qualified do we refuse to sing, to lead songs or prayer?
 - 3) Dishonor God by continuously arriving late, missing part of His worship service?
 - 4) Profane God's covenant by disregarding the agreement we made with Him and our wives when we married them?
 - 5) Hinder our worship to God by our treatment of our wives?
 - c. By avoiding opportunities within the church are we any better than the priests of Malachi's day?

Let the book of Malachi be a guide as to when one's religion is showing signs of spiritual and moral decay! Certainly God is worthy of our best, and we should do what we can to make sure these words prove true:

"For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations," Says the LORD of hosts. - Malachi 1:11

"STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS"

Malachi - My Messenger (Part 2 of 2) (Malachi 2:17 thru Malachi 4:6)

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous lesson we introduced the last of "The Minor Prophets" ...
 - a. Malachi, whose name means "My Messenger"
 - b. A prophet of God during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (ca. 444 BC)
 - c. A prophet who like Ezra the priest...
 - 1) Attacked the spiritual and moral decay at that time
 - 2) Especially among the priests
 - d. A prophet who used the didactic-dialectic style of teaching
 - 1) Making a charge, raising potential objections, and then refuting them
 - 2) Which later became common in Jewish schools and synagogues
2. We have already seen how Malachi addressed three problems affecting Israel at that time...
 - a. They were doubting God's love - Mal 1:1-5
 - b. They were dishonoring God's name - Mal 1:6-2:9
 - 1) By offering blemished sacrifices
 - 2) By offering half-hearted worship
 - c. They were profaning God's covenant - Mal 2:10-16
 - 1) By marrying heathen women
 - 2) By divorcing their Jewish wives
3. In the last section of the book of Malachi, we find...
 - a. More indications of their spiritual and moral decay
 - b. Promises concerning the coming Messiah!

[We begin with the last verse of the second chapter, noting how...]

I. THEY WERE TRYING GOD'S PATIENCE

A. BY QUESTIONING THE JUSTICE OF GOD - Mal 2:17

1. They had wearied God with their words
2. Especially regarding His justice:
 - a. For they said that those who do evil are good in God's sight, that He even delights in them
 - b. For they asked, "Where is the God of justice?"

B. THE LORD'S RESPONSE WILL BE TO SEND HIS MESSENGER - (Mal 3:1-5)

1. First, the "messenger" who will prepare His way for Him - Mal 3:1a
 - a. A clear reference to John the Baptist
 - b. Compare Isa 40:3; Mt 3:1-3; Mt 11:7-10
2. Then will appear the "Messenger of the covenant" - Mal 3:1b
 - a. Here the reference is to Christ, the Messiah for which they had longed
 - b. Who certainly came to His temple - Mt 21:12-14
 - c. And was a messenger of a new covenant - Mt 26:26-28

3. His coming will be one to purge His people - Mal 3:2-5
 - a. Like a refiner's fire and a fuller's soap
 - b. The sons of Levi (i.e., priests) especially, that their offerings may be acceptable
 - c. He will come near to judge those who do not fear the Lord - cf. Mt 3:11-12

[With the coming of the "Messenger of the covenant", they would have their answer to the question "Where is the God of justice?"

As we continue, we see yet another complaint God had against the Israelites in Malachi's day...]

II. THEY WERE FORSAKING GOD'S ORDINANCES

A. GOD CHARGES THEM WITH INCONSISTENCY - Mal 3:6-7

1. Unlike God Himself, whose unchanging nature has kept Him from totally consuming Israel! - Mal 3:6
2. Yet their history showed a practice of apostasy - Mal 3:7a
3. Even when called to return, they ask "In what way shall we return?" - Mal 3:7b
4. No answer is given directly
 - a. Perhaps because the answer is so obvious it does not deserve a response
 - b. Or the answer is given by the example which follows...

B. THEIR TITHES AS A CASE IN POINT - Mal 3:8-12

1. They had robbed God by their failure to offer their tithes - Mal 3:8
2. For this reason the whole nation had been accursed - Mal 3:9
3. They are challenged to bring the tithes, and to see the blessings that would follow - Mal 3:10-12

[The sixth and final complaint that God had against them is now presented...]

III. THEY WERE DESPISING GOD'S SERVICE

A. BY SAYING IT WAS VAIN TO SERVE GOD - Mal 3:13-15

1. Their words were harsh against God - Mal 3:13
2. Questioning what profit there was in keeping His ordinances - Mal 3:14
2. Calling the proud blessed, saying the wicked are raised up, and those who tempt God go free - Mal 3:15

B. YET SOME BEGAN TO HEED MALACHI'S MESSAGE - Mal 3:16-4:6

1. Those who feared the Lord, as they spoke to one another - Mal 3:16a
2. Whom the Lord noticed, and a "book of remembrance" was written - Mal 3:16b
3. Whom the Lord promised to make His "jewels" and spare them - Mal 3:17
 - a. It will be easy to discern the righteous - Mal 3:18
 - b. For the day was coming when the wicked will be burned like stubble - Mal 4:1
 - c. But those who fear His name will be blessed by "the Sun of Righteousness"(i.e., Jesus) - Mal 4:2-3
4. Until then...
 - a. The faithful are exhorted to heed the Law of Moses - Mal 4:4
 - b. And await the coming of "Elijah the prophet" (i.e., John the Baptist had the spirit and power of Elijah) who will come to prepare people for the coming of the Lord - Mal 4:5-6; cf. Lk 1:16-17

CONCLUSION

1. As with most prophets, Malachi had a message for both the present and the future...
 - a. Exhorting the people to look at themselves, how they were guilty of:
 - 1) Doubting God's love
 - 2) Dishonoring God's name
 - 3) Profaning God's covenant
 - 4) Trying God's patience
 - 5) Forsaking God's ordinances
 - 6) Despising God's service

-- Note: These points were adapted from Wiersbe's "Be Amazed" commentary
 - b. Encouraging the people to look forward to the coming of:
 - 1) God's Messenger (John), who would come in the spirit of Elijah and prepare people for the coming of the Lord
 - 2) The Messenger of the covenant (Jesus), who come to refine and purify those willing to repent, and bring judgment on those who do not fear the Lord
2. It is encouraging to note that some evidently took Malachi's message to heart - Mal 3:16-18
 - a. Whom the Lord would claim as His
 - b. Whom the Lord would make His "jewels"
 - c. Whom the Lord would spare as a man spares His own son who serves him

As we come to the close of this survey of "The Minor Prophets", perhaps it is appropriate to ask: Are we willing to take the prophets' messages to heart?

- * They were written for our learning and admonition - cf. Ro 15:4; 1 Co 10:11
- * They help make us wise for salvation which is by faith in Christ - cf. 2 Ti 3:14-15
- * They are certainly profitable for instruction in righteousness - cf. 2 Ti 3:16-17

We pray that in some way this series has helped you to appreciate the value of studying "The Minor Prophets" and applying them to your life.