

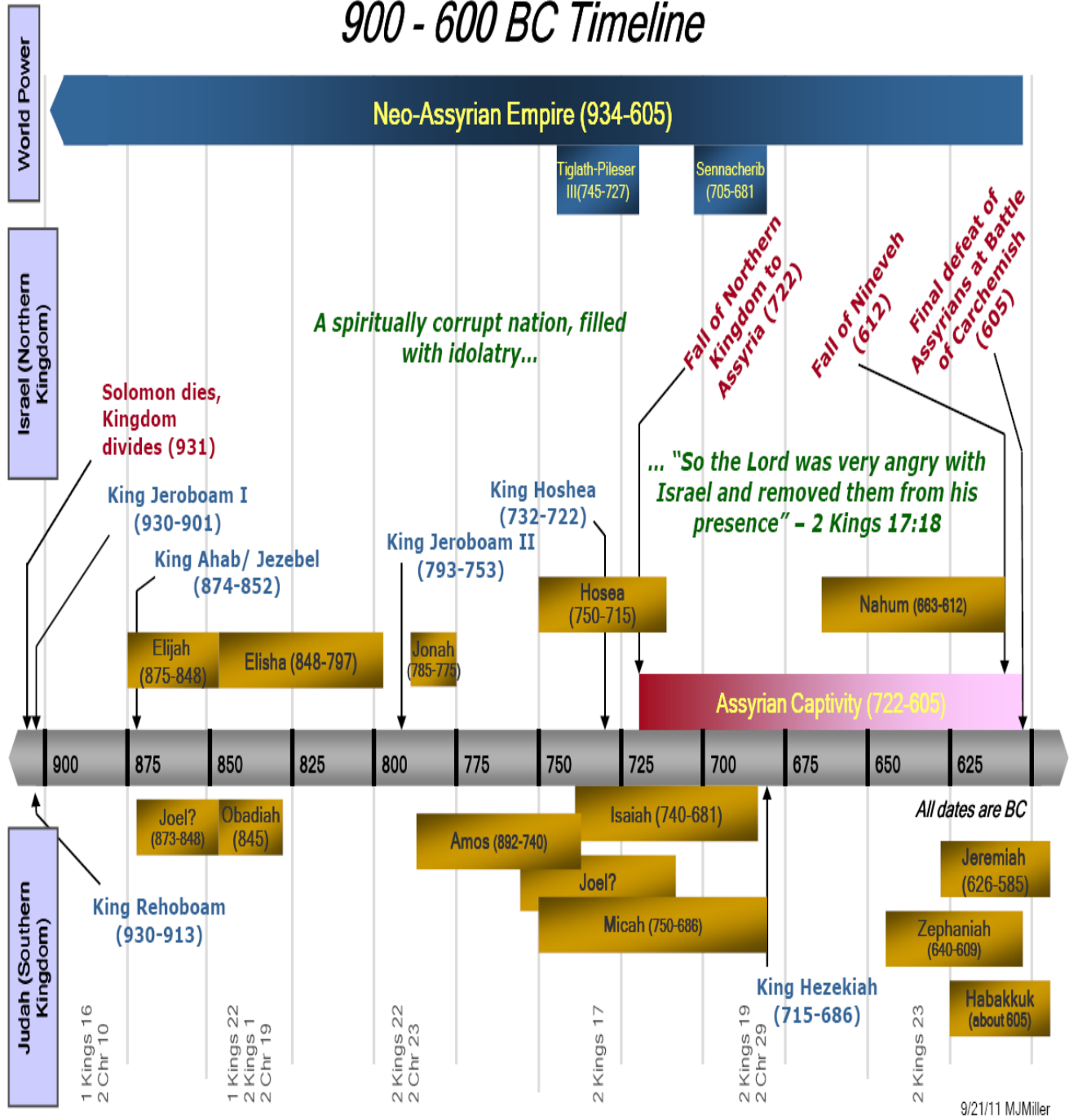
A Study of the Minor Prophets

Throughout the studies of the Minor Prophets, the accompanying timeline of 900-400BC may prove helpful to understand what was going on in the world at the time of the prophet.

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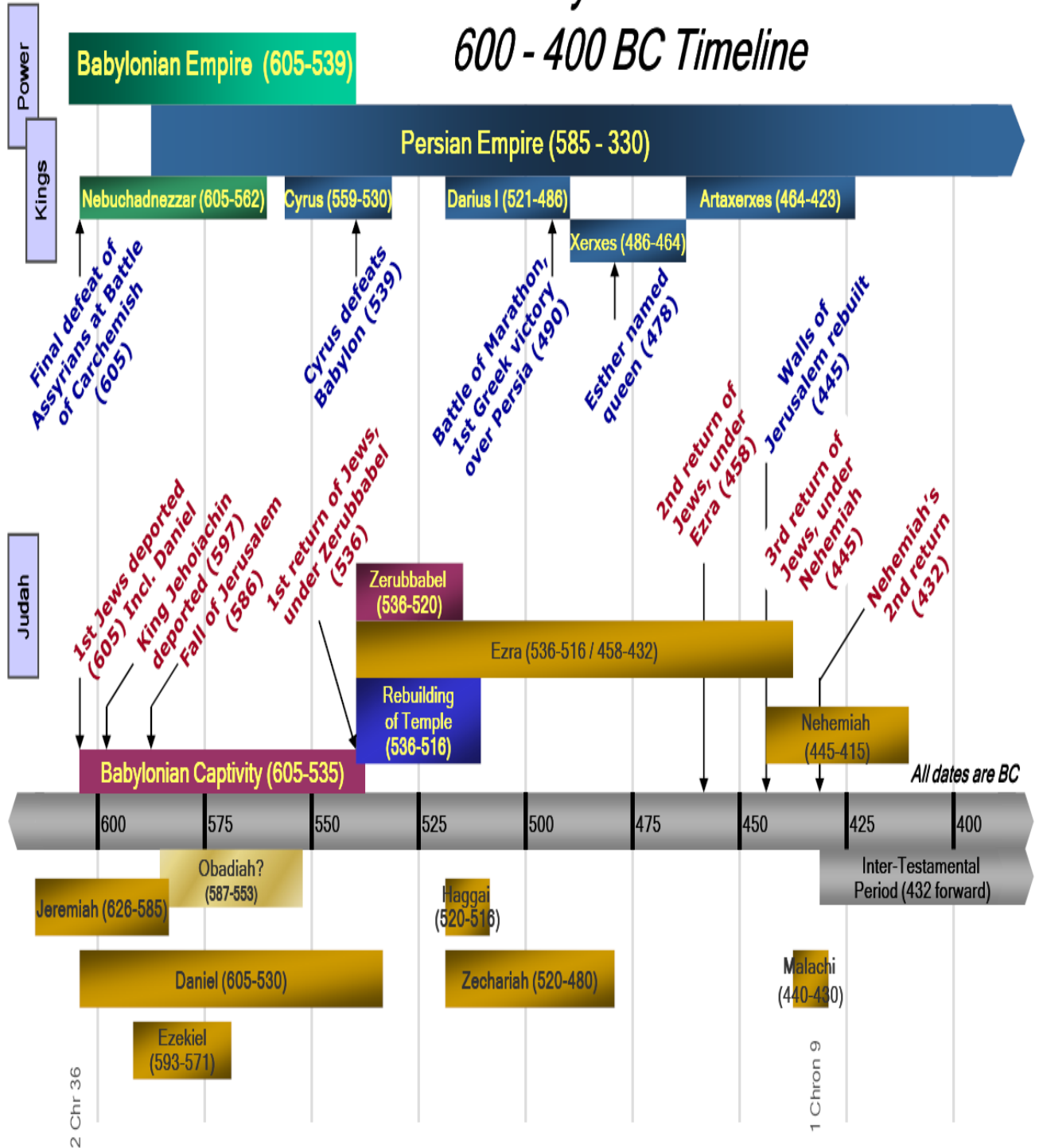
History of the Jews

900 - 600 BC Timeline



History of the Jews

600 - 400 BC Timeline



A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 1-Introduction and Hosea 1-3

Opening Prayer

Introduction to the Minor Prophets

1. What are the Minor Prophets?
 - *The last twelve books of our Old Testament, known in Hebrew as “The Twelve”*
 - *Named because they are considerably shorter than the books of the other prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel*
 - *Customarily written on a single scroll, whereas the other prophetic books each had their own scroll*
 - *Written about 850-450 BC. The history of these times is shared with us in 2 Kings 14-15, 2 Chronicles 26-36, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. The Major Prophets also cover this period of history*

Introduction to Hosea: Israel’s Unfaithfulness – The Lord’s Faithfulness

2. What do we know about Hosea?
 - *His name means “salvation” – symbolizes God’s relationship with Israel*
 - *He was a contemporary of Isaiah, Amos and Micah;*
 - *He lived during the final days of the Northern Kingdom, just before it was carried off into captivity by Assyria, from which it would never return*
 - *At this time, Israel was filled with idolatry, had abandoned God and his commands, and was spiritually and morally bankrupt. They worshiped at shrines and adopted the deities of the land, practicing ritual prostitution and human sacrifice. This led Hosea and other prophets to use prostitution as a picture of the people’s unfaithfulness to the Lord*
 - *He vigorously preached against the idolatry of his time and bravely rebuked the people, kings, and priests in an attempt to remind Israel of the Lord’s loving faithfulness and give a call to repentance*

Hosea chapter 1

3. Read Hosea 1:1-9. Gomer apparently had children by other men (verse 2); and the meaning of the names of her children are “God scatters” (Jezreel) “unloved” (Lo-Ruhamah) and “not my people” (Lo-Ammi). From our introductory discussion, why do you think God put Hosea into this difficult, gut-wrenching relationship with Gomer?

4. Note on vs 4: At Jezreel, Jehu murdered Ahab’s son King Joram and ordered Jezebel thrown from her window into the street. Jehu piled up the severed heads of Ahab’s seventy princes (2 Kings 10:11) at the city gates. The slaughter of Ahab’s family, though not pretty, was still commanded by God. Shortly after Gomer gave birth to Jezreel, God used the Assyrians to bring judgment on Israel by carrying them off into a captivity from which they would never return. How do the names of Hosea’s other two children also foretell an ominous future?

5. What hope do we see in 1:10-2:1? (Reference Genesis 22:17-18)

Hosea chapter 2

6. Read 2:2-13. What is Hosea trying to accomplish in 2:2-5?

7. Name 3-4 ways we can apply these passages to our own lives and our own world?

8. We can easily see how God is speaking to his people through Hosea. What are some of the problems Hosea says will come to Gomer?

9. What is the purpose of the troubles that come into our lives?

10. Read 2:14-23. Why does God keep blessing us even when we turn from him?

11. Once God has reconciled with us, what pictures of harmony do we see in these verses?

Hosea chapter 3

12. Read chapter 3. How does God do the same for you and me as Hosea did for Gomer?

13. For personal meditation: What Baals are in our lives? In what ways are we serving Baal rather than our Lord? From what sins is God calling us to repentance? Is there someone in your life for whom you can be God's instrument of restoration?

Closing Prayer

References:

Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 1321-1324

Eickmann, Paul E., The People's Bible Commentary: Hosea, Joel, Amos. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1994. 1-37

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A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 2 – Hosea 4-6

Israel's Unfaithfulness – The Lord's Faithfulness

Opening Prayer

Hosea chapter 4

1. Read Hosea 4:1-8. What charge does the Lord bring against Israel in verses 1-3? Also look at Leviticus 26:14-20 to see if the Israelites should have been surprised at the Lord's reaction.
2. Do you think we are under the same curses today because of our sins?
3. Hosea 4:4-8 seems to be addressed to Israel's priests. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Why?
 - Today's pastors are just like the OT priests.
 - Pastors are nothing special since they are sinners just like everyone else.
4. Read 4:10-19. Do you see parallels between the OT problems talked about here and the church today?
5. Does God hold the priests (and NT pastors) accountable for the actions of the people?

6. Do you think God will hold others (e.g. politicians, rock stars, athletes, TV evangelists, drug pushers, gang leaders, parents) accountable for the moral and spiritual decline in our country?

7. What's the difference between the idols we worship today (wealth, status, materialism, career, power...) and those that Israel chose?

Hosea chapter 5

8. Read chapter 5. Compare the way the people seek the Lord in verse 6 with the way they seek him in verse 15.

9. How could our worship be displeasing to God, even while we go to church, sing and pray to him? (You may want to reference 1 Kings 18:21 and Matt 6:24.)

10. What types of things do we do today that could be compared to Israel forming an alliance with pagan Assyria when it was in trouble (verse 13).

11. Agree or disagree: Children cannot rise above the moral example set by their parents.

Hosea chapter 6

12. Read Hosea 6:1-11a. The first three verses of chapter 6 are said by the Israelites, and God responds in the next three verses. Do you see anything missing in Israel's words?

What is God's response?

13. Jesus quoted Hosea 6:6 to the Pharisees in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7. Why did the Pharisees need to hear these words?

Why do we need to hear these words?

14. In light of what we have read so far in Hosea, how would you evaluate the teaching of some that says once saved, always saved?

15. For personal reflection: Can you see the sins of Hosea beginning to take root in your heart or in that of someone you know? What will you do about it?

Closing Prayer

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Eickmann, Paul E., *The People's Bible Commentary: Hosea, Joel, Amos*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1994. 38-61

Eickmann, Paul E., *The People's Bible Commentary: Hosea, Joel, Amos – A Study Guide*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1990. 14-18

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A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 3 – Hosea 7-10

Israel's Unfaithfulness – The Lord's Faithfulness

Opening Prayer

As we read through these chapters, we can see how severely God will punish the people for their horrible sins. But, there are also several verses that show us the depth of love he has for his people. Be looking for these as we go through our study today. The law is harsh and meant to show us our sins but our sins do not change the grace of the gospel always there to bring us to Christ.

Read Hosea chapter 7

1. In Hosea 7:2 the Lord says *"I remember all their evil deeds...they are always before me."* Yet King Hezekiah confessed in Isaiah 38:17 *"You have put all my sins behind your back."* How do you explain this seeming contradiction?
2. Why is it important that we confess our sins? (1 John 1:8-9)
3. This chapter talks about the people relying on themselves and on the great nations of the time to save them. They paid a huge price (37 tons of silver!) for protection from Assyria and Egypt, which ended up debilitating them financially and yet it was ineffective in providing protection. They never called on the Lord for help. Why are the following pictures appropriate to their situation?
 - vs 8 – flat cake not turned over

- vs 9 – hair is sprinkled with gray but he does not notice

- vs 11 – like a dove, easily deceived and senseless

-vs 16 – they are like a faulty bow

Read Hosea chapter 8

4. God makes his accusations against Israel more and more clear, and warns of the judgment that will come upon them. In what ways does God say idolatry is foolish? (verse 6)
5. What is the connection between Israel's building palaces and forgetting his Maker? (verse 14)
6. How do those same words apply to us when we say "My retirement is secure because I've made good investments" or "I know I'll be OK because I have the best doctors in the country"?

Read Hosea chapter 9-10

7. Why does God call the Israelite harvest the wages of a prostitute in verse 9:1?
8. What is God showing Israel about their idols in these chapters, especially in 10:5-8, and how does it relate to us today?

9. God's impending judgment will be harsh. The whole nation will be carried off into captivity, separated from the things they love and the land they know and will never return. They will be taken into captivity and all their possessions taken away. Do you think anyone listened to the warnings of Hosea and repented? What happened to those who repented when God's judgment came to Israel?

10. We see God's anger flame, flash and thunder as he looks at the way the people have turned away from him, and don't heed his many warnings. The flood and Sodom and Gomorrah testify to the Lord's anger with sinners. Do you think the coming destruction of Israel was because of the sins they committed or was there more than sin involved?

11. Sometimes the cacophony of sin outweighs the quiet voice of the gospel. But the gospel invitation is still present even if we don't heed it. What are some phrases in these chapters that display the Lord's love for his people despite the lives they have been leading?

12. What will you take away from our study today?

Closing Prayer

References:

Eickmann, Paul E., *The People's Bible Commentary: Hosea, Joel, Amos*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1994. 61-95

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A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 4 – Hosea 11-14

Israel's Unfaithfulness – The Lord's Faithfulness

Opening Prayer

Read Hosea chapter 11:1-11

1. Again God goes back into history to remind the people of what he has done for them. To what time did he refer in 9:10a (Deuteronomy 29-30)?

In 9:13a and 10:1a?

In 11:1 (Exodus 4:22-23)?

Why does God go back in time to these ancient memories?

Have you ever used this technique?

2. What love we see from God in this chapter! We are reminded of Hosea, in 3:1, wanting to take back his wife Gomer at any cost. Here we see God deliberating with himself on just what to do with Israel and we see a true example of grace at its fullest. What is the progression of God's thoughts?

What if God's grace hadn't prevailed and he had carried out the judgment against these people?

A quote from Martin Franzmann: “God in his holiness will not destroy; neither can his love merely overlook and tolerate man’s rebellion. His love will deal effectively with man’s sin. With the roar of a lion the Lord will declare both his inexorable wrath against sin and his inextinguishable love for his children; and at that roar his wayward children will at last come trembling home to him. That roar was ultimately heard at Calvary, and all history since then is the history of the homecoming of mankind.” (Concordia Self-Study Commentary, St. Louis: Concordia, 1971, p 597)

3. How would you respond to someone who points to this description of grace in action, and then draws the conclusion that we can continue doing whatever we want because God’s judgment will not come to us, that he’ll just get angry and then will back down?

Read Chapter 11:12-12:14

4. Even though Israel has been the focus of much of what Hosea records so far, Judah also has fallen away. Jacob didn’t trust God to bless him and stole the birthright from his brother Esau. Many years later he struggled with God (Genesis 32), begging for God’s blessing. At this time God changed his name to Israel. God wants this same change to happen in the lives of Israel and Judah. But they continue to reject him and put their trust in Baal and themselves. They boast of what they have done for themselves. Read Deuteronomy 4:25-31. Is God rejecting or fulfilling his covenant in the coming captivity?

How has God cared for you by disciplining you?

Read Chapter 13

5. Verse 2b says Israel practiced human sacrifice. We are shocked at such a thing. The *People’s Bible Commentary* suggests abortion is a kind of modern human sacrifice to an idol. Agree or disagree?

Why do the four similes in verse 3 provide good images of the life of an idol-worshipper?

6. How does God describe his judgment upon the people in verse 7-8?

Can you picture God in the terms that Hosea uses?

7. What is the message 12-14?

Read Chapter 14

8. We see a confession and repentance in verses 1-3. How can the people find it within themselves to turn from their evil ways? (See also Jeremiah 31:18 and John 15:5)

What promise do we see in verses 4-8?

Compare this covenant with the one in Deuteronomy 4:25-31.

Read together Luther's Third Article of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him. But the Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith."

9. How have you grown from your study of Hosea?

Closing Prayer

References:

Eickmann, Paul E., The People's Bible Commentary: Hosea, Joel, Amos. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1994. 95-123

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A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 5 – Joel

**Return to the Lord, for he is gracious and
compassionate...
abounding in love**

Opening Prayer

Introduction to Joel

1. What do we know about Joel?
 - *His name means “the Lord is God” and he is the son of Pethuel (1:1), but this is all we know about the person of Joel*
 - *Because of the content of his book, we can assume he worked in Judah, the southern kingdom, perhaps in Jerusalem*
 - *Because this book has traditionally been placed between Hosea and Amos, some are led to think they were contemporaries; because Joel talks about priests but no king, some think he may have written at the time of priestly leadership at the beginning of the reign of Joash, the boy-king, 835-796 B.C.; scholars date the book of Joel sometime between 800-400 B.C.*

Read the first three paragraphs of the section entitled The Locust Plague in *The People’s Bible Commentary – Hosea, Joel, Amos*, pg 127-128, for background information.

Read Chapter 1

2. Skimming back through chapter 1, pick out verses that describe the locusts and their effect on the land.

Pick out verses that describe references to a drought.

3. Read Deuteronomy 28:15-19, 22-23, 38. Of what is the Lord reminding his people through the locust plague and drought?

What invitation did the Lord extend to his people in 2 Chronicles 7:13-14?

Do such curses connected with the Sinai law covenant apply to God's New Testament people? (See Galatians 3:10-14)

4. Verse 1:15 announces the "*day of the Lord*" in terms of the locust plague and drought, a dreadful time that will bring much life to an end. Compare and contrast this with what we are told about the "*day of the Lord Jesus Christ*" in 1 Corinthians 1:7-9.

Read Chapter 2:1-17

5. In verse 12 the Lord calls on his people to fast, weep and mourn, as they would for someone who has died. It was a custom of the time to tear their garments when mourning. Explain what God is saying in verse 13 when he says "*Rend your heart and not your garments.*"

Agree or disagree:

- God's law leads us to repent of our sins.
- God's love and forgiveness lead us to repent of our sins.
- We repent of our sins to avoid God's punishment.
According to verse 13, should I fear coming to the Lord to repent of even the most grievous sin?

Read Chapter 2:18-32

6. In verse 25 the Lord says “*my great army that I sent among you.*” What do passages like this emphasize about the troubles in our lives?
7. Joel 2:28-32a was Peter’s sermon text on Pentecost (Acts 2:16). On Pentecost, Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit directly on the believers in Jerusalem. How is the Spirit poured out on us today?

Read Chapter 3

8. In this chapter the Lord pictures the final judgment, when all nations, all people, will gather before him. Verses 9-13 give us two pictures of that final judgment. What are they and how do they help us understand what is to come?

What comfort do God’s people have according to verse 16?

9. Some might consider the prophecy in this book to mean that the people of the physical state of Israel are to be protected in these last days. Why would this not be a good interpretation of this message?
10. What will you remember about the book of Joel?

Read together *Psalm 50:15* “*Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you will honor me.*” Consider committing this verse to memory.

Closing Prayer

References:

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Eickmann, Paul E., The People's Bible Commentary: Hosea, Joel, Amos. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1994. 125-177

Eickmann, Paul E., The People's Bible Commentary: Hosea, Joel, Amos. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1994. 125-177

A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 6 – Amos 1-3

God's Justice and Righteousness Will Prevail

Opening Prayer

Introduction to Amos

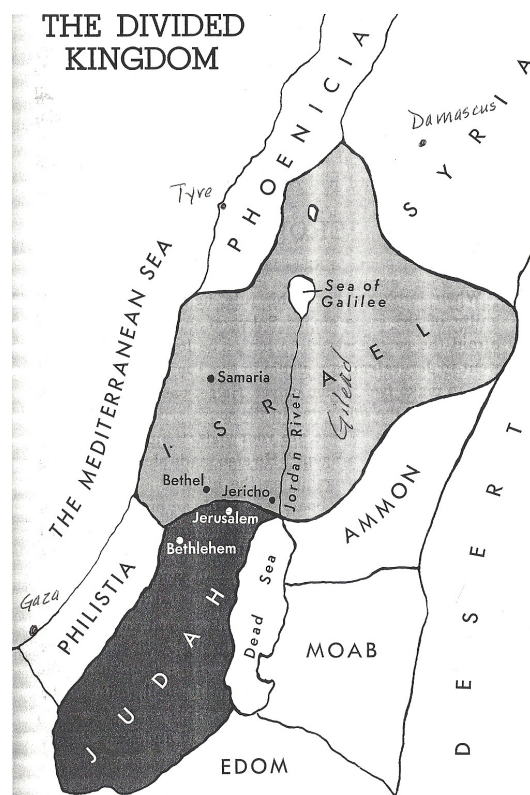
1. What do we know about Amos?

- *Amos was a prophet who worked in Judah, the southern kingdom, during the reign of King Uzziah, aka Azariah, (792-740 B.C.). The history of this time period is found in 2 Kings 14-15 and 2 Chronicles 26.*
- *Amos was a shepherd from Tekoa, 6 miles south of Bethlehem, 12 mi from Jerusalem. He also cared for sycamore fig trees (7:14) While tending his flocks, God called him to take a message to Israel, now ruled by King Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C.). We don't hear of Amos in any other part of the Bible.*
- *It was a time when Judah was expanding, restoring its borders to former sizes. It was a time of idolatry, extravagant living, immorality, corruption of judicial procedures and oppression of the poor. It was shortly before the Assyrian captivity of Israel in 722. The people were following in the steps of Jeroboam I, the founder of the northern kingdom and we read throughout the books of Kings and Chronicles how the rulers "followed in the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit." Thus the sins of Judah thrived in a time of military victories, expanded territories and renewed national pride.*
- *Amos' name means "burden bearer." Israel had continued in their great sins, falling further and further from the LORD. The message he was to take to them would be a difficult one to deliver. His message is addressed also to the southern kingdom as we see references to both Judah and Jerusalem.*
- *Amos' key message is that The Great King, who rules the whole universe, will judge his unfaithful, disobedient, covenant-breaking people.*

- Contemporaries were Hosea and Jonah in Israel (northern kingdom) and Isaiah and Micah in Judah (southern kingdom).
- Archeologists have found evidence of the earthquake he mentions in 1:1 (also mentioned in Zechariah 14:5, more than 200 years later.)

Read Chapter 1-2:3

2. Amos was only a shepherd. Why should the people even listen to him?
3. The phrase “For three sins ..., even for four, I will not turn back my wrath” is repeated several times in the first 2 chapters. What do you think it means?



Judgment against three heathen enemies:

- 1:3-5 – Damascus/threshed Gilead/go into exile –

- 1:6-8 – Gaza/delivered to Edom –

- 1:9-10 – Tyre/covenant of brotherhood –

Judgment against three hostile heathen “cousins” (Edom from Esau, Ammon and Moab from Lot)

- 1:11-12 – Edom –

- 1:13-14 – Ammon –

- 2:1-3 – Moab –

4. God is punishing these unbelieving nations, but how were they to know what they were doing was wrong if they didn't have God's law?

What might the attitudes of the Israelites have been when they heard about what was being prophesied about their enemies?

How might we handle such a prophecy against one of our enemies?

Read Chapter 2:4-16

5. From Chapter 2:4-5 how are the sins of Judah different than those of the previous six nations? Are they as grievous?

6. What are the sins of Israel in:

- 2:6 –

- 2:7 –

- 2:8 –

Read Chapter 3

7. To whom in particular is Amos talking according to 3:2?

Of what do the cause and effect pairings of verses 3-6 warn? (See also Luke 12:48)

8. In verses 9-10, why do you think God has Amos threaten to summon witnesses from heathen nations to look into Samaria?

What are some of the pictures of the complete destruction that will come to Israel?

9. God is angry, at the limit of his patience and promising much destruction. But do you find any comfort in Amos' message so far?

Closing Prayer

Lord, help us recognize our sins and turn to you in true repentance and gratitude.

References:

Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 1350-136

Eickmann, Paul E., The People's Bible Commentary: Hosea, Joel, Amos. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1994. 179-214

The Lutheran Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2009. 1456-1462

A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 7 – Amos 4-9

God's Justice and Righteousness Will Prevail

Opening Prayer

Read Chapter 4

1. Some things to note:
 - vs 1-2 – the lifestyle –
 - vs 4-5 – the attitude about worship –
 - vs 6-11 – God's many warnings –
 - vs 12 – *“Prepare to meet your God...the Lord God Almighty is his name.”* –

Read Chapter 5

2. Some things to note:
 - vs 1-2 – What is God's lament?
 - vs 4-6 – A plea to seek the Lord –
 - vs 7-13 – Corruption of the legal system –
 - vs 18-21 – What will the “day of the Lord” be like for impenitent people?
 - vs 21-27 – What is God's message in these verses and how does it apply to us today?

Read Chapter 6

3. vs 1-7 – What does God say about complacency and how does this apply to us today?

vs 8-14 – Misplaced pride -

Give some examples of how we as a church might be guilty of the same inward moral decay coupled with pride in outward success.

Read Chapter 7

4. In verses 1-6, God showed (1:1) Amos two visions concerning the coming judgment but Amos intercedes for Israel even though the plagues have already begun. Amos doesn't condone the actions of the Israelites but still loves them enough to intercede. Do prayers for mercy change God's mind?

5. In verses 7-9 Amos tells us of a third vision concerning a plumb line. What do you think it means?

What application does this have for our lives?

6. Amaziah the priest wants to send Amos (vs 10-17) away because he doesn't want to hear what Amos is saying. How would you respond if met with such strong opposition to God's true Word?

Read Chapter 8

7. Looking at the signs of the coming judgment Amos tells us about signs in nature in verses 7-10 (Note: history tells us there was a total eclipse at the time of Amos, in 763 BC.)

8. At what other events do we hear of darkness, earthquakes, and other signs from nature?

What would "*a famine of hearing the words of the Lord*" look like?

Read Chapter 9

8. In the fifth vision God describes the total destruction of Israel. He talks of the same earthquake that Amos mentions in 1:1 and 8:8. And those not killed by the earthquake will be killed or carried off by the Assyrians. Compare and contrast the words of Psalm 139:7-10 with those of verses 2-4.

In verse 7 God says his chosen nation, Israel, is really no different from any other nation. He has provided for them all but by their actions, Israel has given up its claim on the special blessings from God. Lord, from this preserve us! Yet, what promise does God give us in these last verses of chapter 9? To what does “*in that day*” refer?

9. What have you learned from our study of Amos?

Closing Prayer

Lord, help us recognize our sins and turn to you in true repentance and gratitude. Have mercy on us, Lord.

References:

Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 1356-1364

Eickmann, Paul E., The People's Bible Commentary: Hosea, Joel, Amos. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1994. 214-273

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A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 8 – Obadiah

God’s Judgment on a Proud and Rebellious People

– God’s Grace in Keeping his Covenant Promise

Opening Prayer

Introduction to Obadiah

1. What do we know about Obadiah?

- *Shortest book in the Old Testament*

- *The first prophet, after Moses, to put this message into writing*

- *Obadiah seems to be an expansion on the predictions against Edom in Amos 9:12*

- *Obadiah’s name means “servant of the LORD”, a common OT name.*

– *The date of Obadiah is disputed. The Concordia Study Bible and the Lutheran Study Bible, along with some scholars put his writing during the Babylonian Captivity (605-586 B.C.). However, the People’s Bible Commentary and other scholars listed below place him 250 years earlier, about 845 B.C. In placing it earlier, they cite the positioning of the book in the OT, the observation that Jeremiah appears to have read and made use of Obadiah, and the fact that Obadiah doesn’t speak about the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, but rather the plundering of the city; surely such a major event would have been more explicitly mentioned had it already occurred.*

- *The theme concerns the coming destruction of Edom, a centuries old enemy to the south of Judah and home of the descendents of Esau, twin brother of Jacob. Edom was an arrogant and cruel country that gloated over Israel’s devastation by foreign powers.*

Read Obadiah

2. From where did Obadiah get the message he delivered?
3. Who is Edom and where is Edom?
4. Who remembers how “*the violence against your brother Jacob*” (verse 10) got started?

Since Isaac’s blessing on his two sons said they would be at odds with each other, should Esau/Edom be blamed for their attitude toward Jacob/Judah? Why?

5. Look at the pictures of Sela, the capital of Edom, today known as Petra. Why do you think they might have cause to be proud about their security (verses 3-4)?

Additionally they had significant copper and iron deposits, and the King’s Highway, an important trade route, ran through the middle of the land. It would have been easy to be proud. What are some temptations that increasing wealth and success may bring into the life of a child of God?



Entry to the dead-end canyon leading to Petra (Sela) and the cave homes of people who lived there

6. According to verses 5-9, what type of destruction was Edom going to experience?

How do Psalm 127:1 and Psalm 33:12 relate to the sins of Edom?

7. Verses 19-21 talk about the restoration of Israel. In what two ways can we understand this?
8. Who are the deliverers Obadiah mentions in verse 21?
9. How has this study of Obadiah brought you closer to Jesus?

Closing Prayer

Edom paid the price for spiritual arrogance and indifference; Israel was punished for unfaithfulness; even so, God was faithful to his promises and patiently called his people to repentance. He gave us a Savior. Lord, move me to be your witness and do only your will in my life.

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Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 1365-1368

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A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 9 – Jonah

God's Compassion

When Dealing with Jonah and with Nineveh

Opening Prayer

Introduction to Jonah

1. What do we know about Jonah?

- Jonah is never mentioned as author; he is referred to only once, in 2 Kings 14:25 when King Jeroboam II restored the borders of Israel “in accordance with the Word of the LORD...spoken through his servant Jonah...”

- A Galilean prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel, from Gath Hepher, near Nazareth, he was the first apostle sent to the Gentiles

- Jonah lived during the reign of King Jeroboam II, 793-753BC; he was a contemporary of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah

- In Israel this was a time of spiritual poverty under an evil king, when the kingdom was being eaten away by Assyria. In 722 BC Assyria, a savage nation, defeated Israel completely and took them into captivity.

- As Assyria reached out to conquer more and more land, they neglected the affairs at home and there were numerous revolts and great turmoil. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. Interesting fact about Nineveh: it is one of the most ancient cities in the world, founded by Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah (Genesis 10:9-12) shortly after the Flood.

Read Jonah 1:1-16

2. God tells Jonah to tell the Ninevites that God is angry with them. So where does Jonah go (verse 3)?

Obviously Jonah's heart and mind were not in tune with the will of God. What lessons are there in this for us?

3. Why do you think Jonah knew that he was the cause of the storm?

Discuss the consequences some may fear that then hinder them from acknowledging their guilt.

Read Jonah 1:17-2:10

4. Why do you think so many Bible critics scoff at verse 1:17?

What is the danger in accepting, or not challenging their accusations?

5. Jonah's prayer in chapter 2 is one of the highlights of the book. Many use the following as a model for their prayers:

A – Adoration

C – Confession

T – Thanksgiving

S – Supplication

How does Jonah show adoration?

How does Jonah confess?

How does Jonah give thanks? (Can you imagine giving thanks if you were in his situation?)

What is Jonah's supplication?

6. Jonah's prayer contains portions and thoughts from many Psalms. Read these verses from chapter two and then read the Psalm references. Compare the words and thoughts.

<i>vs 2 – in my distress...you listened</i>	Psalm 30:2-3, Psalm 120:1
<i>vs 6 – from the pit</i>	Psalm 103:3-4, Psalm 18:16
<i>vs 7 – to your holy temple</i>	Psalm 23:6, Psalm 5:7, Psalm 18:6
<i>vs 8 – worthless idols</i>	Psalm 135:15-18
<i>vs 9 – song of thanksgiving</i>	Psalm 107:1

What application does this have to our lives?

Read Jonah Chapter 3

7. God gives Jonah another chance. Why do you think God went to such extremes to have Jonah go to Nineveh?

Jonah said "Forty more days and Nineveh will be destroyed." There may have been more

that he said, but even if this is all he said, it was sufficient. Where do you see law in this sentence?

Do you see gospel in this sentence? Explain.

8. An entire heathen city, with an estimated population of 500,000, is brought to repentance in only one day. This is truly a miracle; something we would say is humanly impossible. But with God nothing is impossible. Luke 11:30 says *“Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites.”* In addition to his message, how might Jonah himself have aided in this huge change in the Ninevites?

Why would the king require the animals to fast as well as the people (verse 7)?

Some would say that the repentance of Nineveh was not sincere. Spaude (People’s Bible) says:

“...the word “repentance” is used in Scripture in both a narrow and a wide sense. Whenever it is coupled with “faith” or “believe”, it has the narrower meaning: sorrow over sin...Whenever “repentance” is used alone, however, it usually has the wider meaning: sorrow over sin and faith in the Savior for forgiveness.” (p. 75).

From this Spaude would say the repentance was sincere. Verse 10 gives us further proof of their repentance.

Read Jonah Chapter 4

9. After the joy of chapter 3, chapter 4 begins on a very sad note. Jonah is angry because he doesn’t think God was fair in forgiving the Ninevites. After all, they didn’t keep any of the laws, weren’t circumcised and just plain didn’t deserve God’s mercy. Can you think of other examples from the Bible when people had a similar “it’s not fair” attitude?

Knowing that Jonah would have been familiar with the works of the prophets, why else might he have been angry?

What striking differences do you see between Jonah's prayer in chapter 2 and the one he said in verses 2-3?

Have you ever found yourself praying in a similar way?

10. Did God answer Jonah's prayer?

Outline the steps God used in working with Jonah.

What can we learn about disciplining our children from the way the Lord worked with Jonah?

11. What messages will you take away from the book of Jonah?

Closing Prayer

References:

Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 1369-1375

Spaude, Cyril W., The People's Bible Commentary: Obadiah, Jonah, Micah. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2004. 30-89

A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 10 – Micah

Israel's Judgment and Salvation

Opening Prayer

Introduction to Micah

1. What do we know about Micah?

- Micah was from Moresheth, an insignificant village on the border between Judah and Philistia, 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem

- For Judah this was a time of political instability, social injustice, moral degeneracy and spiritual poverty. Idolatry was wide-spread and worship was a mere formality, with people simply going through the act of worship and sacrifice but their hearts were not in it.

- Judah had been invaded by Israel and King Ahaz appealed to Assyria for protection. Thus they gave up their independence and annually paid huge amounts to Assyria for their protection.

- Micah was a prophet in the Southern Kingdom of Judah and was a contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah. He was working in the Judah during 722 B.C. when Assyria carried the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity.

Read Micah Chapter 1

2. As with other prophets, Micah presents his credentials – the words he spoke came from God himself. (1:1) Which sin is the underlying cause of both the social and the spiritual

problems of Israel and Judah? What message is there in this for us today?

3. Note the play on words with the names of the cities in verses 10-15:

Gath – “Tell Town” Beth Ophrah – “Dust Town” Shaphir – “Beautiful City”

Zaanan – “Exit Town” Beth Ezel – “Neighbor Town” Maroth – “Bitter Town”

Jerusalem – “City of Peace” Lachish – “Chariot Town” Moresheth Gath – “Gift Town”

Aczib – “False Town” Mareshah – “Conqueror Town” Adullam – “Refuge Town”

Try to read these verses substituting the meaning of each city name.

Read Micah Chapter 2

4. How do the prophecies of God’s plans in this chapter align with the common picture of a loving God who would never let anything bad happen to his people? (See also Isaiah 42:8, Romans 6:23)

What words or phrases show us the gospel message in this chapter?

Read Micah Chapter 3

5. Power corrupts. Give examples that this applied in Micah’s day and how it applies today?

Because of these gross sins, Jerusalem would be completely destroyed; this happened in 586 B.C. when Babylon leveled the city and took the people captive. (2 Kings 25 and Lamentations)

Read Micah Chapter 4

6. Verses 1-8 talk about God's mercy in promising a restoration for all penitent people. What are some of the pictures of this restoration that we see in this chapter?

But first, Israel must endure the consequences of their sins.

Read Micah Chapter 5

7. Verse 2 is a familiar Christmas reading; it's always interesting to see familiar passages in their context. What is the message of this chapter?

Today the church still is engaged in battle with enemies of Christ. Where does the church find its weapons to use in this ongoing battle? (Also see Ephesians 6:10,17)

Read Micah Chapter 6

8. According to verse 8, what is our duty to God and to our neighbors?

Read Micah Chapter 7

9. How does the world of Israel described in the first six verses, in some ways, also describe our world today?

How does the Christian respond to such corruption?

How does the believer respond to God's blessings in his life?

10. In the future, what will you remember about Micah?

Closing Prayer

References:

Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 1376-1385

Spaude, Cyril W., The People's Bible Commentary: Obadiah, Jonah, Micah. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2004. 98-170

A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 11 – Nahum

God Controls History for the Good of His People

Opening Prayer

Introduction to Nahum

1. What do we know about Nahum?

- We know nothing about Nahum except what he tells us in 1:1, his name (a common name) and that he is from Elkosh. We don't know where this city is but most scholars place it somewhere in Judah.

- His name means "comfort"

- He wrote to the people of Nineveh for the benefit of the people of Judah, shortly before the fall of Nineveh, about 663-612 B.C. Amazingly, the city was still at its peak of glory and the only superpower of its time, so his message would be quite shocking and unbelievable. The northern kingdom of Israel had already been taken captive by Assyria at this time. Nahum's message of destruction for Nineveh, capital city of Assyria, was meant to give comfort and hope to the people of Judah as they see how God is always in control

- Nineveh was very old at this time, having been settled by descendents of Noah's son, Ham. (Gen 10:11-12). It was a huge city, 30 miles long and 10 miles wide, with more than 120,000 inhabitants, built along the Tigris River. It was a wealthy city built by slave labor and plunder taken from neighboring countries during their especially vicious and cruel battles

Read Chapter 1

2. As with other prophets, Nahum begins by establishing that his message comes from God; he is acting as the Lord's mouthpiece.
What 4-6 characteristics of God do we see in the first 11 verses?

Do any of these characteristics surprise you?

3. Both Judah and Nineveh had sinned greatly. Why do you think God is treating them so differently?

Read Chapter 2

4. Nahum describes the fall of Nineveh with brilliant pictures of the frantic activity as they are attacked by the Medes and Babylonians, who were known to dress their warriors in red. The troops are moving so quickly they stumble over each other. As Nineveh grew, they had built a dam to store up water in the rainy season and let it come into the city in the dry season. Now the enemies use that water to flood Nineveh where most buildings were made of mud brick. The people are carried off into slavery and the great wealth of the city plundered.

The lion was the symbol of Assyria. Why was this an appropriate symbol?

How can we be sure Nineveh fell because of an act of God, not simply because an enemy had superior firepower?

Read Chapter 3

5. How does Nahum's writing style, especially in vs 1-3, help create the picture of destroyed Nineveh?

To what does Nahum compare Assyria in vs 4-8 and why is it an appropriate picture?

Note: Thebes, situated on the Nile, was the capital of ancient Egypt and home of the Pharaohs. It was a world class power and its neighbors, Cush, Libya and Put were aligned with it. But their pride in their strategic position and military power did not stop Assyria from conquering it in 663 B.C. Nahum says Nineveh should learn from Thebes.

Do you find any significance in having a man whose name means "comfort" wrote this book?

God dealt with Nineveh's pride, cruelty and idolatry in a very convincing way. What lessons do you learn about God from this book?

6. How has this book brought you closer to Jesus?

Closing Prayer

References:

Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 1386-1391

Westendorf, James J. The People's Bible Commentary: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 1-81

A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 12 – Habakkuk

The Righteous will Live by Faith

Opening Prayer

Introduction to Habakkuk

1. What do we know about Habakkuk?

- He has a name that would have been strange to the Hebrews, and we really know nothing about him except that he was a prophet and he wrote this book. By his words, we also know that he had a strong faith and trusted in God implicitly.

- His name is mentioned in the apocryphal book Bel and the Dragon, where an angel lifted him up by his hair, transported him to Daniel while he was in the lion's den; he gave Daniel some food, and then was returned. An interesting little story - legendary rather than historical.

- We estimate he wrote at about the end of the Assyrian empire, just as Babylon was beginning to take power. This makes him a contemporary of Nahum (Northern Kingdom), Zephaniah and Jeremiah (Southern Kingdom). He would have been in the Southern Kingdom as Israel had already been taken captive by Assyria.

- Good King Josiah had attempted reforms in Judah but after his death his son, King Jehoiakim, brought back all of the godless attitudes and wicked behavior that we have talked about in previous studies. Habakkuk would have been writing at this time.

Read Chapter 1:1-11

2. Habakkuk, too, begins by establishing that his message comes from God; he is acting as the Lord's mouthpiece to carry a message to Judah.

These first two chapters record a conversation between Habakkuk and God. What is

Habakkuk's first complaint and how does God answer him?

Read Chapter 1:12-2:1

3. How does Habakkuk's second conversation with the LORD begin?

Yet, Habakkuk has a second question. What is it?

Read Chapter 2:2-20

4. Habakkuk confidently waited for God's response. How did God respond?

God hates evil and wants all to be saved. From your knowledge of the Old Testament prophets and Bible stories did God ever send the gospel message to Babylon?

What message did God give Habakkuk in verse 20, which applies so well to us also?

5. What general principle of life is God telling us in verses 13-14 and 18-20?

What traits might we see in ourselves that parallel those of the Babylonians?

What would Habakkuk tell us if he were sitting in the room with us?

Read Chapter 3

6. Habakkuk's prayer is really a psalm, set to music, for use in worship. As a prophet, he would have been teaching the righteous how to trust and praise God through his own outpouring of praise. What is his primary message?

What does Habakkuk's irrepressible joy mean in the context of injustice?

In God's use of wicked Babylon?

Of our own expectations?

7. Which verses of this chapter would make a good Thanksgiving message, especially in times of great difficulties?
8. How has the message of Habakkuk brought you closer to Jesus?

Closing Prayer

References:

Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 1392-1398

Serendipity Bible for Groups, 4th Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998. 1294

Westendorf, James J. The People's Bible Commentary: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah.
Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 82-145

A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 13 – Zephaniah

Be Silent before the LORD, for the Day of LORD is Near

Opening Prayer

Introduction to Zephaniah

1. What do we know about Zephaniah?

- From his genealogy in 1:1, Zephaniah may have been the great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah, a good king who tried to reform Judah. If this is true the current king, Josiah, also a righteous king, would be a cousin.

- Josiah ruled from 640-609 B.C. He was only 8 years old when he became king. Initially he was under the influence of advisors who carried on the sins of his father, Amon. As he became older he began some reforms. While repairing the temple he found the Book of the Law, read it, and began much needed reforms. Zephaniah may have worked with Josiah to institute these godly changes in the country.

- Zephaniah's contemporaries would be Nahum, Habakkuk and Jeremiah.

- Nineveh fell in 612 BC and Assyria was finally defeated by the Babylonians in 605 B.C. The first Jews, including Daniel, were deported at this time. Zephaniah would have lived during these days.

Read Chapter 1

2. Zephaniah begins by establishing that his message comes from God; he is acting as the Lord's agent. We read Zephaniah's words and the people heard his voice, but what he says comes straight from God and we hear his words as if from God himself. What a comfort that we don't need to decide if Zephaniah, or any of the other writers of Scripture, is correct or just men offering their own ideas and thoughts.

In verses 4-6, God says he will stretch out his hand against which people?

Why do you think he started with this nation?

Which three groups in particular displeased God in this nation? (verses 4-6)

Where do we see these groups in the church today?

Judah is the sacrifice which the Lord has prepared (verse 7); it is their blood that will be shed, and the invited guests are the people of Babylon, who will take joy in plundering the riches of Judah.

3. The judgment described in this book can be applied to two separate situations. What are they?

4. What are some of the descriptions of the “*Great Day of the LORD*” in verses 14-18?
What is the reason for this day of judgment for Judah?

Read Chapter 2

5. Chapter 1 leaves us with a helpless feeling; no one could escape the coming disaster. What hope is presented in the first three verses of this chapter?

Why do you think so many would not do this, both then and in our day?

In light of Zephaniah’s words, should we fear the Great Day of the Lord?

6. Zephaniah pronounces a judgment on the countries surrounding Judah, to the west (Philistia), east (Moab and Ammon), south (Cush) and north (Assyria). What do you picture when you read about the end of Philistia in verse 7?

What picture do we see as Moab and Ammon are destroyed in verse 11?

What happens to those who are haughty and defiant, like the Assyrians who at Zephaniah's time were the height of civilization?

Read Chapter 3

7. If anyone in Judah still didn't get the message, Zephaniah makes it clear in the opening words of chapter 3 that they are included in the judgment. What is the message of the first five verses?
8. From verses 5-8, how do we know that God does not take pleasure in the destruction he was announcing?

In your opinion, what one quality do you think God wants restored in his people today?

9. Verses 9-13 bring the beautiful gospel message of salvation. How do we know that this salvation comes from God alone? Also see Ezekiel 36:25-27.

What are some of the pictures of the world after judgment day?

What moves Zephaniah to break out into a song of praise in verse 14ff?

Read verse 17 together and then reread it, substituting your name for the pronouns. What impression does this have on you?

10. How has Zephaniah brought you closer to Jesus?

Closing Prayer

Lord, preserve us. Work the desire for repentance in our hearts and bring us home.

References:

Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 1399-1405

Westendorf, James J. The People's Bible Commentary: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah.
Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 146-222

A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 14 – Haggai

Put God First

Opening Prayer

Introduction to Haggai

1. What do we know about Haggai?

- The Book of Ezra provides the historical setting for Haggai. The Jews were just returning from 70 years of Babylonian captivity. The first group of about 50,000 was led back by Zerubbabel in 536 B.C. and he was named their governor. The rebuilding of the temple began with opposition from neighbors who feared the religious and political implications of a rebuilt temple. But after 18 years of half-hearted work, the work lagged because the people were more interested in building their own homes. Haggai's message is "Build God's house!" because he was concerned that people put God first and themselves second. The temple was finally dedicated in 516 B.C.

- Based on 2:3, some think Haggai may have seen Solomon's temple before it was destroyed. This would make him at least 70 years old at the time of his ministry which covered about four months in 520 B.C.

- Zechariah (we look at him next week!) worked with Haggai to encourage the people to honor God first

- Haggai's name means "festive"

Read Chapter 1

2. What is a prophet?

What evidence do we see in the first ten verses of this chapter that shows God was using Haggai to get his Word to the people?

Compare the attitude of the people of Haggai's time with those in Exodus 36:2-7.

How might we take to heart the Lord's words in verse 5?

Compare the results of working for ourselves first with putting God first.

Verse 14 lists the only way any lasting and good work for the Lord is going to get done. Why is it good for us to remember this today when we set up programs?

3. Why is it always a miracle when people listen to and obey what a pastor says in a sermon?

What confidence do we have when we put the work of God ahead of our own comforts? (verse 13)

Read Chapter 2

4. Haggai mentions three imperatives in verses 4-5. What are they and why are they important for us to remember today?

5. Agree or disagree: .We can infer from Haggai's message that a congregation going into a building project should always strive to build the most spectacular building possible.

6. What is inspiring and comforting about hearing God tell us that the glory of his present house will be greater than the glory of the former houses?

What does it mean when God declares “*in this place I will grant peace*” in verse 9?

7. What is the message of verses 10-14?

What is Haggai saying they should do? (verses 15-19)

Agree to disagree: The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

8. What is a signet ring (verse 23)?

Notice that Zerubbabel’s name is recorded in the genealogy of Jesus, both in Matthew 1:12 and Luke 3:27. .As a son of David and of Zerubbabel, how is Christ like God’s signet ring?

9. How has Haggai’s message brought you closer to Jesus?

Closing Prayer

References:

Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 1406-1410

Hartzell, Eric S. The People’s Bible Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991. 1-29

Hartzell, Eric S. The People’s Bible Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi – a Study Guide. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991. 3-6

A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 15 – Zechariah, chapters 1-5

The Return of the Lord

Opening Prayer

Introduction to Zechariah

1. What do we know about Zechariah?

- Zechariah's name means "The LORD (Yahweh) remembers" and he is sometimes called the prophet of Holy Week as there are many prophecies of things that happened during that week

- He was born in Babylonia and returned to Judah in 538 B.C. under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua. He worked with Haggai to help rebuild Jerusalem and the temple; he was also a contemporary of Ezra

- Luther calls him one of the most comforting prophets

- He was both a prophet (1:1) and a priest, succeeding his grandfather, Iddo, as priest (Nehemiah 12:10-16)

- The purpose of his book is similar to that of other prophets: to rebuke the people of Judah, to encourage them to complete rebuilding the temple, and to bring about spiritual renewal

- The book begins with 8 visions he had one night. They are not dreams as he had them while he was fully awake (4:1). Yet they seem surreal and strange, much as a dream might.

Read Chapter 1

2. Does Zechariah's plea that the people be better than their forefathers apply to us today?

3. Vision 1 – *The Man Among the Myrtle Trees*: The horses are angels, sent out by God, to look after the safety and welfare of his people (Ps 91 talks about the work of the angels). God's people are troubled as many of them are still in Babylon (vs 12). It's the oppressing nations that are at ease (verse 11). Because God loved his people so very much, he was jealous for them (verse 14), and became angry with them; he used the Assyrians and Babylonians to punish them. But the violence those nations showed against the Jews has made God even more angry (verse 15). How can God's response in verses 16-17 help us when we have huge difficulties in life?

4. Vision 2 – *Four Horns and Four Craftsmen*: The four horns are the nations that devastated Israel – Assyria, Egypt, Babylonia and Greece. But the four craftsmen are the Lord restoring Israel. How does this vision show the difference between the approach of Satan and the approach of the Lord?

Read Chapter 2

5. Vision 3 – *A Man with a Measuring Line*: The measuring line is a very powerful symbol of what the Lord has planned for the rebuilding of Jerusalem – for heaven. What are some of things he tells us about the future?

Verses 10-13 say Immanuel, which means "God with us," is coming to earth to live with us. What comfort do we get from this?

Read Chapter 3

6. Vision 4 – *Clean Garments for the High Priest*: What is some of the symbolism that you see in this vision? Do you find this vision comforting? Why?

Read Chapter 4

7. Vision 5 – *The Gold Lampstand and the Two Olive Trees*: The bowl has an abundant supply of oil from the seven channels, symbolizing the fullness of God's power that will never run dry. It is the light, God's Word, which shows us the way through life and to eternal life. With God's help, Zerubbabel (from the line of David) rebuilt the temple and then Joshua, the high priest, could continue the work of the priesthood. The two olive trees seem to symbolize the priestly and royal offices of the Messiah. Why would this vision move Luther to call Zechariah one of the most comforting prophets?

Read Chapter 5

8. Vision 6 – *The Flying Scroll*: How does the message of the flying scroll apply to us today?

Do you need a billboard or a flying scroll for God to get your attention?

Vision 7 – *The Woman in a Basket*: The wickedness of the people is being kept track of (measured). What a blessing it is for us to know that wickedness is contained and does not have free reign in our lives. God will rid the world of evil on judgment day and heaven will truly be holy-without sin. What do visions 6 and 7 have in common?

9. What will you remember about the message of these visions?

Closing Prayer

References:

Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 1411-1418

Hartzell, Eric S. The People's Bible Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991. 31-64

A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 16 – Zechariah, chapters 6-9

The Return of the Lord

Opening Prayer

Read Chapter 6

1. Vision 8 – *Four Chariots & A Crown for Joshua*: The chariots are angels sent out from God, anxious to do their work. The enemies of Israel usually came from the north and thus God fights for his people and there will be peace in the end. (vs 1-8). Verses 9-15 speak of a coronation. Though we have men's names listed, Jesus is the only one who fits the description of these verses. Jesus is the Branch. What connection can be made between the temple that God commanded his people to build in the Old Testament and the temple about which the New Testament speaks? (See 1 Peter 2:5 and Revelation 21:22)

According to Peter, what is the purpose of this NT temple?

What warning that we heard so often in the books of the other prophets is repeated in the last sentence of the last paragraph?

Read Chapter 7

2. God continues to speak to Zechariah. The people want to know if they were to continue fasting as they had done while in Babylon. We've heard God's answer in our studies of other prophets. God doesn't want empty worship! How do we know if our worship is God-pleasing?

Read Chapter 8

3. God loves us dearly and wants us for his own; he is jealous of the other gods we put ahead of him. He loves us so much he comes looking for us when we've been unfaithful. God is merciful and promises a beautiful place for us where crops prosper, where violence and sickness will not take the lives of the old, and where children will play joyfully. On this side of heaven the world will never be perfect but we are encouraged to be strong until this New Jerusalem is ours. Listen to the prophets (and our pastors) to learn what pleases God and then put it into practice. Be joyful in worship, reveling in God's forgiveness. Encourage others so they also can share this New Jerusalem.

Verses 9 and 13 talk about having strong hands. What does this mean and how do we get strong hands?

Can you give any examples from your life when you definitely knew God was holding your hand?

What picture do we see in verse 23 and how does it happen?

Read Chapter 9

In this last half of the book we will see numerous prophecies of the Messiah

4. Hadrach, Damascus, Hamath are cities to the northeast in Syria; Tyre and Sidon are in Phoenicia along the coast to the north; Ashkelon, Gaza, Edron, Ashdod are all in Philistia to the south. God promises that the day is coming when the true faith will win out and his people will reign unmolested and undisturbed. What blessed sleep this promise gives us also!

What is the two-fold fulfillment of 9:9?

Describe the picture we see in verses 9-13.

Can you think of a hymn verse, commonly sung during Reformation, that we have pictured in verses 14-15?

5. So far, do you agree with Luther that this is a comforting book?

Closing Prayer

References:

Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 1418-1423

Hartzell, Eric S. The People's Bible Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991. 65-94

A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 17 – Zechariah, chapters 10-14

The Return of the Lord

Opening Prayer

Read Chapter 10

1. Why is God especially hard on the shepherds or leaders in verses 1-3?

God did scatter and reject his people (verses 6-12) because he could not tolerate the sin and rebellion of his people. But he also has compassion and mercy and will bring them back, so many it seems as if there won't be room for them all. How does God say he will strengthen his people and bring them back (verse 12)?

Read Chapter 11

2. Why are the trees and the fields being destroyed? (see also Romans 8:22)

God wants very much to save his people, but they are rebellious. They prefer to follow shepherds who betray them and lead them away from God instead of following the true Shepherd, the Messiah. Following these shepherds is their punishment because God will finally let them have their own way.

3. What do you think the two staffs, one called Favor (or Friendship) and one called Union, symbolize?

Of what do verses 12-13 remind us and how does this fit into the picture of the staffs?
(See also John 10, Matthew 27:10)

The terror this chapter brings into our hearts (the law) is meant to lead us to repentance so there is room in our hearts for God's comfort, his gospel. Lord, be my Good Shepherd and lead me.

Read Chapter 12

4. In 2 Corinthians 12:10 Paul said "*When I am weak, then I am strong.*" Give examples from verses 1-9 of how this is possible.
5. Compare verse 10 with John 19:37.

Look at verses 11-14. Is this the way we respond to having pierced Jesus? Why or why not?

Read Chapter 13

6. When is "*on that day*"?

Verse 4 says false prophets will do anything to avoid being discovered. Have you ever tried not to be labeled a Christian? How did it make you feel?

7. Compare verse 7 with Mark 14:27. Who was the shepherd that was struck and when did it happen?

When times get hard, why is the phrase “*The Lord is my God*” in verse 9 the best help?

Read Chapter 14

8. After the evils or war and destruction (verse 2) there will be a great reversal and God will fight for his people and conquer every enemy. What similarities do you see between verse 6-11 and Rev 21:23-22:2?

On the great Day of Judgment, those who do not worship the True God will be destroyed. There will be no distinction between sacred and secular because everything will be used to serve the Lord. This is our purpose in life – to praise the Lord with great joy.

9. What have you learned from our study of Zechariah?

Closing Prayer

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A Study of the Minor Prophets

Lesson 18 – Malachi

Prepare for the Coming of the Lord

Opening Prayer

Introduction to Malachi

1. What do we know about Malachi?

- Malachi's name means "my messenger" and he is the last prophet from God until John the Baptist, 400 years later.

- The temple had been rebuilt 75-80 years ago and more Jews had returned from Babylon, including the priests. Under the leadership of Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt 10-15 years earlier. Ezra had read the Book of the Law at the dedication of the walls and many people had committed to change their ways and follow God's commands. However, just a few years later the people have become disillusioned with their lives and no longer trusted in God's promises. Their priests had become corrupt and their worship had deteriorated. They no longer took the Law seriously.

- Into this environment, God sent Malachi to reprimand, reassure, and warn God's people.

Read Chapter 1

2. In the first six verses, the Lord says he loves his people. They question it. Then the Lord points to his love of Israel and his hatred of Esau (Edom) as demonstrated by the destruction of their land. How does this response show God's love?
3. God wanted the first and the best to be brought to him as a sacrifice. Why?

He told the priests they showed only contempt for him (verse 6) with their defiled offerings. What yardstick should we use to know if our offerings are good enough for God?

Read Chapter 2

4. God condemns the priests and speaks harshly to them because of their despicable actions. From verses 1-6 what does God expect of those called as pastors and workers in the church?

But we know that only God truly knows what's in someone's heart. If an unbelieving pastor, or a pastor deep into sin for which he has not repented, blesses me or gives me Holy Communion, am I still blessed and are my sins forgiven?

Do you think false prophets are ever exposed?

5. God talks about two kinds of unfaithfulness. One is spiritual adultery as described by Judah "as marrying the daughter of a foreign god". Give an example of spiritual adultery that exists in the church today and what is God's response to it?

Malachi also talks about marital unfaithfulness that leads to divorce. What three elements of marriage does Malachi point out to us?

Why does God say he hates divorce?

6. What makes God weary?

Self reflection – do you think you have ever made God weary?

Read Chapter 3

7. When Jesus came, he came suddenly even though his coming had been prophesied for thousands of years and John the Baptist had been sent to prepare the way. When Jesus comes again, it will be just as sudden. God wants perfect purity. What pictures does Malachi give us to show how we are being prepared for that day?

We have all felt that refiner's fire and launderer's soap in our lives. How can we be certain that we are acceptable to God and not the ones he talks about in verse 5?

8. God tells the people they are robbing him by not bringing their whole tithe and offering. Why is God interested in getting money?

What giving challenge does he put in front of the people?

Read Chapter 4

9. How is a soul set free like a calf let out of the barn?

Why is the closing message of the Old Testament so important (verses 4-6)?

10. How has Malachi's message brought you closer to your Savior?

Closing Prayer

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