

Bible Study Guide – Bible Commentary: A Summary Of The Minor Prophets, 6 Book Bundle (1)

JONAH, OBADIAH, JOEL, HOSEA, AMOS, MICAH

*Christian home-group discussion course on
6 of the 12 Minor Prophets*

BY

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Books In This Series:

6 Book Bundle (1)

6 Book Bundle (2)

Complete 12 Prophet Bundle

Jonah – Book 1 Obadiah – Book 2

Joel – Book 3 Hosea – Book 4

AMOS – Book 5 Micah – Book 6

Nahum – Book 7 Zephaniah – Book 8

Habakkuk – Book 9 Haggai – Book 10

Zechariah – Book 11 Malachi Book 12

Introduction

*“Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser;
teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.”*

Proverbs 9:9

It must be registered from the outset that this is an outline study only of the so called ‘Minor Prophets’; written as an introduction to a small group of people who played a huge role in guiding/warning the nations of Israel and Judah of The Lords will regarding them.

It is not intended to be an in-depth expose but rather a ‘taster’ in the ministry of the Lord through the written works of his servants the prophets. It is written in such a way that discussion is encouraged, and questions asked as well as answered.

As such I am sure that the readers themselves, with just a little study would be able to expand considerably the material presented here – which is in fact the intention of this modest work.

Each Prophet will be considered individually, the intention being to create an overall work in the form of twelve individual books, covering the twelve prophets.

Are they relevant for Christian study today ? Well quite apart from such scriptures as “all scripture is God breathed....” 2 Tim 3:16 here are just a few examples that stand out...

- Habakkuk 2:4 “The just shall live by his faith”
Sparked the Reformation under Martin Luther.

- Zechariah 11:12 Gave us the price of a slave – 30 pieces of silver, and many other details relating to the coming messiah.
- Joel 2,3 warns us of the ‘last days’ and the trials to come.
- Malachi 3:1 reveals the ministry of John the Baptist and the fact that he would come again to herald the return of the Messiah.

The Prophets.

First of all it must be emphasised that the title of ‘Minor Prophets’ does not in any way place these individuals and the instructions that they gave, in an inferior category to the ‘Majors’ such as Isaiah or Jeremiah.

The ‘minor’ title really just applies to the brevity of the messages given by these Prophets in relation to their more wordy brothers, and is thought to originate in Augustine’s time (4th C.)

Up until then the whole Old Testament was referred to as ‘The law and the Prophets’ which included also the ‘Writings’.

In the Jewish canon what we call the ‘Minor’ Prophets are simply known as the ‘twelve’ and are listed amongst the other Prophets.

God is not impressed by our many words but rather our faithfulness to the calling into which he has called us – something to be borne in mind !

The Purpose:

The purpose of this work, as alluded to earlier, is not to write yet another commentary or theological discourse on the minor prophets. The purpose rather is to inspire debate and discussion, perhaps in a home bible study group, that will lead to a better understanding not only of the times and circumstances in which the prophets lived and ministered; but in fact a better understanding of where we are right now.

This work is in fact **intended to be incomplete**, and if doing the purpose for which it was conceived, should lead to many questions and discussions ! For this reason at the end, and throughout the books I have included some questions that should be brought to the group, to inspire and prayerfully consider the answers given by the rest of the group.

In many countries, apathy – not persecution - is the biggest enemy of the word of God in the times in which we find ourselves. Intelligent conversation, even heated argument is needed, if we are not to be sucked into an apathetic Christianity that is quite happy to see the unbelieving world slip away into a lost eternity.

Dates

In the following chart I have endeavoured to place a time around which the various prophets ministered. It should be understood that in a few of the cases i.e. Obadiah, there may be considerable debate as to the actual dating of the book, in these instances I have taken the ‘path of least resistance’ and chosen the most universally accepted date.

There may also be some debate as to when the books were actually written i.e. some suggest that they were written after the actual events. Thankfully it is not within the remit of this introductory work to investigate these possibilities! I have chosen therefore to select the most appropriate time in relation to the prophet involved with the book.

However do feel free to disagree; remember this work is all about intelligent debate leading to understanding – eventually !

As for the order of the prophets, as they appear in this work. I have begun with the prophet Jonah – why ? because he is my favourite !

Yes it's terrible to have favourites I know, but that's just the way I am. Jonah makes me laugh, and he makes me sad. The important thing is that he makes me something ! Remember apathy? I can relate to Jonah and his frustrations and fears. Maybe you can relate better to Joel, or Malachi perhaps ? I would count it as a great success if after this study, you are able to relate a little better with any of the very real characters found within this group, we know as the minor prophets.

After Jonah, we will revert to studying in a more orderly fashion, as this does help to get a better 'handle' on what and who was where at any given time in history.

Timeline

Here in the chart below is a timeline, that will help with understanding just who was king at the time of the prophet's ministry; as well as other relevant details.

THE MINOR PROPHETS (Update)

Prophet	Date (B.C.) Approx	Name Meaning	Prophecies To/About	King at Time (assumption)
Obadiah	845-750	'Servant of the Lord'	Israel/Edom	<i>Jehoram</i> (Ju) <i>Joram</i> (Is)
Joel	835-796	'Yahweh is God'	Judah	<i>Joash</i> (Ju) <i>Jehu/Jehoahaz</i> (Is)
Jonah	793-753	'Dove'	Nineveh	<i>Jeroboam 11</i> (Is) <i>Amaziah</i> (Ju)
Hosea	753-715	'Salvation'	Israel	<i>Jotham/Ahaz</i> (Ju) <i>Jeroboam/Pekah/Hoshea</i> (Is)
Amos	760-755	'Burden-bearer'	Israel/Judah	<i>Jotham/Uzziah</i> (Ju) <i>Jeroboam/Pekah</i> (Is)
Micah	770-710	'Who is like unto the Lord'	Israel/Judah	<i>Jotham/Ahaz/Hezekiah</i> (Ju) <i>Zechariah – Hoshea</i> (Is)
Nahum	655	'Consolation'	Nineveh	<i>Manasseh</i> (Ju) *
Zephaniah	625	'Yahweh hides'	Judah/Assyria. And Nations	<i>Josiah</i> (Ju)
Habakkuk	610	'Clings to'	Judah/Nations	<i>Josiah/Jehoahaz/Jehoiakim</i>
Haggai	520	'My Feast'	Judah	N/A
Zechariah	520	'Yahweh has remembered'	Judah	N/A
Malachi	460 - 420	'My Messenger'	Judah	N/A

Colour Code.

Did good.

Did Evil.

Did good and Evil

- Manasseh deserves ‘special’ mention here as he is recorded as the most evil king that Judah ever had (2 Kings 21) and yet he repented and turned to the LORD in the last years of his reign.

Spotlight On The Minor Prophets:

JONAH

*Book 1 of a Christian home-group
discussion course on the 12 Prophets*

BY

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Illustrations by

[*Agnieszka Gorak*](#)

The Prophet Jonah

*“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.” **Jonah 1:2***

BACKGROUND:

Based around 780 BC, the book of Jonah is written during the time of reign of Jeroboam II. Jonah is mentioned in 1 Kings 14:25.

This was a time when the Assyrian empire was reaching its most powerful.

Nineveh eventually conquered and took into captivity the northern kingdom of Israel in 722-721 BC

Nineveh itself was a massive city and is recorded as being around 7 miles in circumference with stone walls and towers over 200 feet high and 50 feet thick – wide enough for 6-7 chariots abreast; enabling quick defense to any part of the wall that was threatened. The city is first mentioned in Genesis 10:11 as being founded by the hunter Nimrod, who also built the tower of Babel and so instituted a rebellion against God. From this we see that the city of Nimrod (Nineveh) is always seen in a negative light, when it comes to the worship of the true God.

Famous for the worship of Ishtar (Astarte) the fertility goddess, the city of Nineveh was also full of temples (around 2,000) to many different deities including Sin, Nerbal, Shamash, and Nabu – just to name a few.

The Assyrians themselves had a well-deserved reputation for utter ruthlessness and barbarity, towards any who stood against them.

It was into this situation that The Lord decided to send Jonah, with a message to repent or be judged. In fact The Lord gave them 40 days until they faced utter destruction, but Jonah knew that if they repented then God would forgive, as he complains here..”

“Isn’t this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. 3 Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.” Jonah 4:2

Jonah has been described as a complete bigot by some, and a patriot by others, both standpoints have their merits. However put yourself in Jonah’s shoes before judging too harshly, or indeed commending too loudly.

The Ninevites were the sworn enemies of the Israelites, indeed they were the persecutors of many nations at that time. They worshiped false idols, offering human sacrifice and worship through temple prostitutes. In the eyes of a man of God such as Jonah, the Assyrians were an abomination worthy of the full measure of a righteous God’s wrath.

Imagine for a moment if you as a Christian, had a neighbor who worshiped the devil, beat you up whenever you passed, and from whom you had to hide your daughters – then the Lord comes to you one night and says he is going to judge them for their wickedness...and you’re to take the news! The problem is that you know they are likely to repent and be forgiven – what would you do ?

Before going further discuss this with the group for a few minutes, and gauge the reactions.

Jonah's Journey

*“Let my words, like vegetables, be tender and sweet, for tomorrow I may have to eat them.” - **Author Unknown***

The story of Jonah is familiar to millions worldwide. It transcends racial, religious and cultural boundaries inasmuch as it is steeped into the collective consciences of millions world-wide. To be a Jonah, is to be someone who is cursing all those around them by their very presence. Sailors even to this day refer regularly to someone ‘being a Jonah’ if they have suffered a series of misfortunes.

What's in a name: Jonah means ‘Dove’ or messenger. Fundamentally that is what he was, a simple messenger of the Lord – and a very effective one at that.

Story in a nutshell

The Lord has seen the wickedness of the people of Nineveh, and decided to judge them for their wickedness. Jonah is chosen to be the messenger to the Ninevites. He is however not happy with his task and immediately runs from the presence of God.

In the process of running from his mission, Jonah jumps on board a trading ship heading for Tarshish, which unsurprisingly is in the opposite direction to Nineveh.

A storm brews up threatening to sink the ship which results in the crew drawing lots, to see who had brought this

calamity upon them. Jonah is pointed out and confesses that it is his fault, telling them to throw him overboard to prevent any further disaster. The crew reluctantly agree, Jonah is thrown overboard straight into the mouth of a giant fish, that keeps him there for three days, when Jonah finally repents.

*“In my distress I called to the Lord,
and he answered me.
From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help,
and you listened to my cry.”* **Jonah 2:1**

He is puked up on the shore near the city of Nineveh, and his remarkable ministry causes everyone to repent in sackcloth and ashes – including the King and even the animals of the field.



God hears the cry of the Ninevites and their repentant heart, and decides to forgive them their sins – Jonah is hopping mad. Hoping to change God’s mind Jonah sits down under a vine shelter, that the Lord has caused to grow up, in order to await the destruction of Nineveh.



A worm comes, kills the vine, Jonah is roasted under the hot sun and says to The Lord *"It would be better for me to die than to live."* **Jonah 4:8**

The story end by God pointing out to Jonah that there is a lot more at stake than perhaps Jonah is thinking about.

"You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?" **Jonah 4:10**

MAIN POINTS:

- God sees the wickedness of Nineveh and determines to judge it.
- Calls on Jonah to warn of impending doom.
- Jonah does a runner – ends up in the belly of giant fish.
- Jonah repents and goes (reluctantly) to deliver the message.

- Ninevites believe Jonah's message and repent in sackcloth and ashes-even the King.
- Jonah not happy – just wants to sit down and die!

Points For Discussion – Group Input

“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.” **Luke 6:35**

Q1 – Why would The Lord care about the Ninevites, the great persecutors of Israel?

First Clue.....’For God so loved the WORLD’
(John 3:16)

Discuss>>>>>>Jews thought that The Lord loved only them...Whereas he is the God of all the world.

Danger in judging people who may or may not be ‘worthy’
!!

Q2 – Why did The Lord choose Jonah, and why did he run?

Answer.....Why Not !! The lord is no respecter of persons
(acts 10:34)

Often he will choose the weak to defeat the strong (witness the story of David vs. Goliath) or the foolish to confound the wise (1 cor 1:27) **Get someone to read.**

My own experience: I was once told that ‘God would not use you if you do not love the people’ Utter Nonsense !.....**discuss** - many ways to love people. Jonah being the prime example of someone who did not love the people but God used him anyway.

Why did Jonah run?

Firstly, Jonah had every good reason (he thought) to wish Gods judgment on the Ninevites.

They were the great tyrants of the Middle East, the persecutors of Israel, an ungodly mob fully deserving of HIS God’s wrath.

Secondly, Jonah 4:2 **Get someone to read** ‘slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness’(Jonah 4:2) .

He (Jonah) was right !

Q3 – Why did they believe Jonah ?

Answer: The story of Jonah was probably known to the Ninevites.

His story had gone before him. Remember we are talking about a man who had been puked up alive on a beach, from the mouth of a giant fish. There was more than likely witnesses to this ‘beaching’. Apart from which there is no doubt that the stories from the sailors themselves would have travelled far and wide.

When the Ninevites saw Jonah, they were more than ready to hear his message...Gods planning perhaps ?



SUMMARY - LESSONS

1 – “For God so loved the world” The Lord loves and wishes everyone to come to repentance. (1 john 1:9 if we confess our sins....).

Repentance = Deliverance.

2 – God can and does, call on all kinds of people to accomplish his will. This book tells the story of a reluctant prophet who arguably becomes one of the most effective preachers in the entire Bible – and he was not happy about it !

Spotlight On The Minor Prophets:

OBADIAH

*Book 2 of a Christian home-group
discussion course on the 12 Prophets*

BY

James Paris

Illustrations by

[*Agnieszka Gorak*](#)

The Prophet Obadiah

History/Background

The year is approx. 845 B.C. I must point out that there is doubt surrounding this date as there is dispute over whether Obadiah is referring to the sacking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC or in fact referring to 845 BC when Jerusalem was attacked by the Philistines and the Arabs. As such, this book is one of the most difficult to date with accuracy.

For this work though I have chosen the 845 BC date. Either way, it has no significant influence on the message given by the Prophet Obadiah.

The Situation:

Israel has been split into two kingdoms after the death in 925 B.C. of King Solomon.

King Solomon in his later years had ruled Israel with a rod of iron, partially enslaving his own people in order to complete his immense building projects and serve his ever-growing army of administrators and lackeys. This caused huge resentment amongst the common people who thought that the death of King Solomon – as sad as it was – would lead to an easing of the burden that they were under. Unfortunately this was not to be the case as his heir Rehoboam, promised even harsher discipline when he took over the reins of power.

“ My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.”

1 Kings 12:14

As you may imagine, this did not go down at all well, and indeed was against the advice of his elders. This resulted in ten tribes going their own way, and forming the Northern kingdom of Israel with the late King Solomon's labour advisor Jeroboam as their King.

Question To Ask – What would you have done in the Israelites situation; stayed on to get beaten and abused, or risk moving to a better, if uncertain future?

The southern Kingdom is ruled by Solomon's son Rehoboam and is named Judah.

Eighty years later

We pick-up now at the time of Obadiah. Jerusalem at this time (845 B.C.) had just been attacked and looted by the Philistines and the Arabs supported by Edom.

The Book

What's in a name? Obadiah means 'Servant of the Lord' or 'One who serves'

Shortest book in the Old Testament.

Point of note – this is one of the 7 Old Testament books that are not quoted in the NT.

However it is quoted in several places by the prophet Joel and Jeremiah. Cf Joel 2:32, Jeremiah 49:14

Subject matter is of course God's judgment!

This time however it is not the usual suspects i.e. the Israelites or Assyria but instead it is against the Edomites.

Who were the Edomites?

They were the descendants of Esau - Jacobs's brother. The pair being the late sons of Isaac and Rebekah.

Right from the get go there was conflict between the two brothers (Gen 25:22,23) READ

This conflict continued throughout their history:-

- Jacob talked Esau out of his birthright for a plate of stew. (Gen 25:27-34)
- He tricked his father Isaac into blessing him instead of Esau. (Gen 27)
- There was potential for real trouble when the brothers met years later. (Gen 32-33)
- Conflict at the time of the Exodus when Edom refused the Israelites safe passage through their land. (Num 20:14-21)



- Enmity continued with King David (11 Samuel 8:14)

• During the reign of Jehoram Edom revolts and sets up their own King (11 Kings 8:20-22) about 845 B.C. Obadiah gives this prophecy to the Edomites.

Points of note:-

- 'Edom' means Red – the color of the stew for which he sold his birthright.
- Much of the land owned by the Edomites was made up of dark red sandstone. The ancient city of Petra, with its stone buildings carved out of solid stone, being the most famous example for us today.

- This was also the color of Esau at his birth (Gen 25:25).

Why does Obadiah preach God's judgment on them?

READ Obadiah 1:10-11 *"Because of violence to your brother Jacob,*

You will be covered with shame,

And you will be cut off forever.

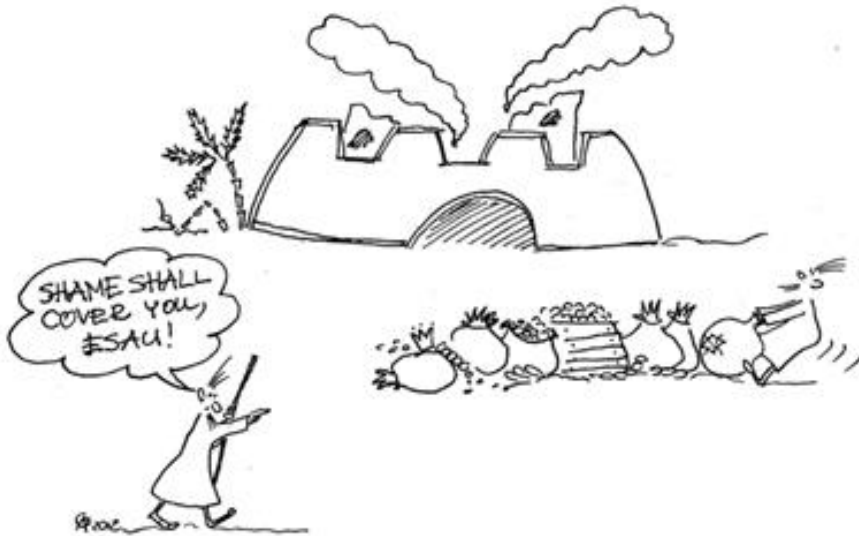
¹¹ *"On the day that you stood aloof,*

On the day that strangers carried off his wealth,

And foreigners entered his gate

And cast lots for Jerusalem—

You too were as one of them..."



The city of Jerusalem had been attacked by the Philistines and Arabians. The city had been stormed and looted. Edom, who was in a state of revolt, sided with the invading forces and shared in the spoils (Obad. 11). They gloated over

Israel's misfortune (Obad. 12-13), and killed or imprisoned those who fled the destruction (Obad. 14).

V18 Read. Also Malachi 1:3-4 .. *“but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.”* 4 *Though Edom says, “We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins”; thus says the Lord of hosts, “They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever.”*

Question To Ask

When did the final confrontation between Jacob and Esau take place?

Answer: During the trial of Jesus Christ, when Jesus (a descendant of Jacob) stood before King Herod (a descendant of Esau).

Who does God use to judge? v7 *“All the men allied with you Will send you forth to the border, and the men at peace with you Will deceive you and overpower you. They who eat your bread will set an ambush for you.”*

Enter the Nabateans; The Nabateans were caravan drivers, traders and merchants whom the Edomites trusted and traded with. They were their business partners. They were allowed access into the city, but they turned against the Edomites and overthrew them.

By 100 A.D. the Edomites were entirely lost to history. The ancient and prosperous capital Petra not rediscovered until 1812 by a Swiss explorer, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt.



Lessons For Today

The Lord takes a VERY dim view of betrayal !!

- The ultimate sin of Edom was its lack of family values or brotherliness. Edom stood by and gloated over the misfortune of a brother nation. "He who rejoices at calamity will not go unpunished" (Prov. 17:5).
- If you share in the spoils of wrong doing, even by 'standing aloof' you have become 'as one of them' (Ob 11).
- As you sow so will you reap – The Edomites sought to utterly destroy the Israelites but were themselves totally destroyed. (Obadiah 15). "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap!" (Gal. 6:7).

Pride comes before a fall, The Edomites were proud and arrogant . Read 2-4

Proverbs 16:18 "Pride *goes* before destruction,
And a haughty spirit before stumbling."

Pride is all about 'I '

Remember Pride was the sin of Lucifer **READ...Isaiah 14:13,14** where you will see the five I Will's of Lucifer

"But you said in your heart,

***I will** ascend to heaven;*

***I will** raise my throne above the stars of God,*

*And **I will** sit on the mount of assembly*

*In the recesses of the north. **I will** ascend above the heights of the clouds;*

***I will** make myself like the Most High. '*

Daniel 4: 28-37 King Nebuchadnezzar ate grass for 7 years

Answer to pride – James 4:10 "Humble yourself before God and he will exalt you"

Often we ask ourselves the question, is this message from The Lord. Or perhaps is this individual for real ! So-called men and women of God will sometimes come up to you with a prophecy or a 'word from The Lord'. The bible tells us to judge every word to be sure of its origin and its validity, for false teachers will surely mingle amongst God's people.

2 Peter 2:1-3 *But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. ² Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; ³ and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.*

One of the surest ways to judge whether a message is from The Lord or not, is to look at the individual giving the

message. Notwithstanding the fact that the Lord does indeed use ‘broken vessels’ to perform his purposes, a truly ‘spiritual’ individual will always display a certain humility or fear of The Lord in their lives and attitude.

The real signs of a Godly man or woman is not pride and arrogance but a Godly humility.

Summary

The conflict between Edom and Israel is often used to visualize the battle that goes on in a Christians life between the forces of evil (Edom) and the power of the Holy Spirit (Israel) in our lives.

The Apostle Paul , speaks about the fight between the flesh and the spirit that battles constantly within us (cf. Galatians 5:16–18 : Rom 7;24)

For the Christian, the fight against ‘the flesh’ or worldly desires goes on; **it does not stop** when you accept Jesus into your life.

The war against sin has already been won at the cross – but the battle against the flesh continues and will continue, until we finally meet with The Lord in Heaven.

Spotlight On The Minor Prophets

JOEL

*Book 3 of a Christian home-group
discussion course on the 12 Prophets*

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Illustrations By

[Agnieszka Gorak](#)

The Prophet Joel

“Blow a trumpet on Zion, and sound an alarm on my Holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the Day of The Lord is coming; surely it is near.” Joel 2:2

Historical Setting.

The year is approx 830 B.C .

Judah is ruled by the boy King Joash (7 years old) .

When Prince Joash was just a baby, his father King Ahaziah was embroiled in a coup in neighboring Israel, and was killed. Immediately his mother (who took the title Queen Mother) Athaliah (daughter of Ahab & Jezebel) seized the throne herself, killing all her own male descendants as rivals. Baby Joash – the last remaining from the line of David - however, was rescued by the late king's sister, Joash's aunt Jehosheba. The wife of the Lord's Priest Jehoiada, she hid him in the temple, and the two of them raised him up.

When Joash was only 7 years old the priest Jehoiada overthrew Athaliah and placed Joash (the Lords choice) on the throne.

Tutored by the Godly priest Jehoiada, Joash started of well, but as is so often the case, ended up badly.

After the death of his mentor Jehoiada (at 130years old !) he could not cope with the pressure of his peers and abandoned the lord.

Joash finally commits murder by sentencing Jehoiada's son Zechariah (whom the Lord had sent to reason with him) to death.

Over 800 years later, Jesus later referred to this martyrdom when he said, *“From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.”* (Luke 11:51)

He was himself finally murdered by a group of his opponents as he lay in bed recuperating from a lost battle with the Syrians.

Not buried with the Kings but instead was given a commoners grave. (2 Chron 24:23-27)

Where to read Joash's story: 2 Kings 11 - 12; 2 Chronicles 22:10; 24:23-27

The Book

What's in a name? Joel means “Yahweh is God” YHWH (Yahweh) or (Jehovah) the ‘Tetragrammaton’ the unpronounceable name of God, personal name to the Israelites.

Main Theme – Impending Judgment ! “The day of the Lord” and the Final restoration of God's people.

‘Day of the Lord’ in three phases

First ‘day of the Lord’.

Read 1 ; 1-7

Starts with a terrible plague of locusts which have afflicted Judah and compares this with the coming judgment.

Pointing out that as bad as it seems, there is a lot worse to come. (1:1-13)

Second ‘Day of the Lord’.

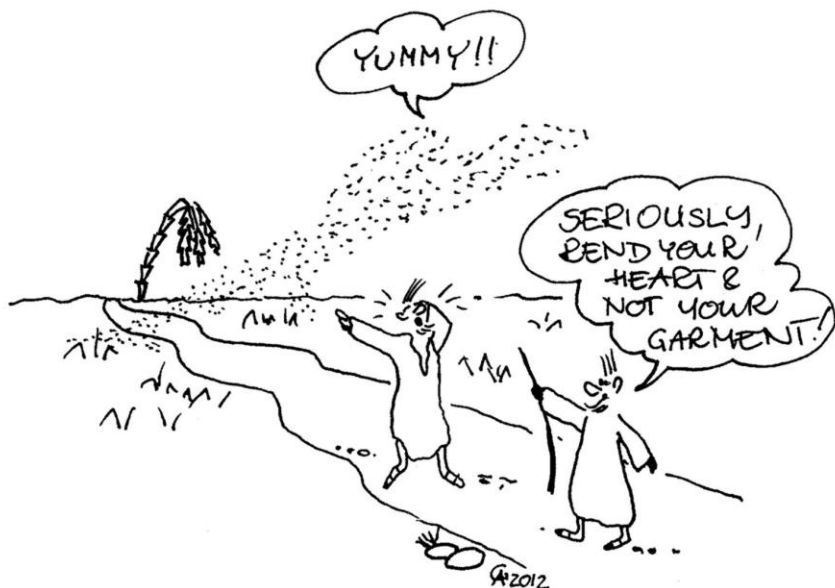
Read 2:1-3

Warns of a terrible conflict to come. Joel 2:1-11.

This could be the coming captivity by the Babylonians in 587 or the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD or the events in the 'End Days' or indeed all of the above!

God calls the people to repent and 'Rend their hearts and not their garments' (2:13).

'Yet even now' v12-13 Talk.



Restoration of the Nation 2:18-27 ...v25 "then I will make up for you the years that the swarming locusts have eaten"

READ (Joel 2:28) *"And it will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions."*

Also Acts 2:17 familiar words; spoken by Peter on the day of Pentecost after the Holy Spirit had fallen and the disciples all began speaking in 'tongues'

Third 'Day of the Lord'.

Read 2:30-31

Even up to this time there is still time for repentance v32- 'whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved' again, a familiar scripture. Used by Paul in Romans 10:13. Also 3:14 – even the valley of judgment is called the valley of decision!

Further proof that God is indeed 'slow to anger and abounding in loving-kindness' (2:13).

Millennial Reign ? 3:16-18 **Read**



Applications for Today

This is perhaps one of the most exciting of the Minor Prophets with regards to our times.

Out of Three 'Days of the Lord', two have already passed and the third is possibly just around the corner. The 'Battle of Armageddon' the final conflict between the forces of Good and Evil before the millennial reign of Christ.

Read Acts 2:17-21

First lesson

There is a judgment day coming, when God will judge the nation of Judah for their backslidden ways.

As is the case of most of the Old Testament prophecies, this has a present and a future meaning for the peoples of the earth.

It often seems to us, that God is a bystander in times of crises and it was indeed the same with the ancients.

However although The Lord may be 'slow to anger', he does get angry ! Judgment for sins is not optional – it is inevitable.

The call to 'rend your hearts, and not your garments' is simply a call for true repentance and not the sham repentance of the person caught with their 'hands in the money box'.

Second Lesson

The Lord is always ready to forgive, and forgiveness leads to restoration.

One of the most exciting and yet the most un-acted upon scriptures in my opinion is this.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

Too many Christians today walk around with a heavy baggage of guilt on their shoulders. Even knowing the forgiveness of the Lord, they continue to let Satan rob them of their future joys, by reminding them of their past evils. The forgiveness of God knows no boundaries, and no limitations.

The fact is that if you have received Jesus into your life, then you are already blessed beyond measure and forgiven your past sins completely. The Psalmist put it correctly when he said “As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.” Psalm 103:12

Why would the devil like to remind you just how much of a sinner you are ? The answer is simple; a guilt ridden Christian is about as much use as a chocolate fire-guard ! If you are struggling under a burden of sin and guilt; then you are hardly likely to make an effective witness, for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The devil cannot take away your salvation, however he can take away your effectiveness as a herald of the gospel of Jesus Christ - if you allow him to.

Over the years I have come up against many Christians struggling with depression, often linked to guilt because of something that they have done, or commonly something that has been done to them that has left them ashamed and fearful. Even in bible college the call was sometimes “thank God and Prozac, I’m ok now!” verging on

blasphemy I know, but that's the truth of it. As tragic as these things are, or have been; the answer is to start believing the scriptures, repent of any wrong-doing or perceived wrong-doing, and move on with life. The old saying "confession is good for the soul" in this instance is true. Not confession before men, but before God the Father, through the Son Jesus.

Question:

Is there any sin that The Lord will not forgive a repentant Christian ?

Perhaps think or discuss the 'unforgivable sin' of blasphemy against the holy Spirit. Matt 12:31-32

Can a Christian commit this sin.... NO

This is a case where Jesus was accused of healing by the power of Beelzebub, when in fact it was by the power of the Holy Spirit. Hence they were blaspheming against the Holy Spirit – the unforgivable sin.

Anyone who has accepted Jesus into their lives, has also accepted The Father and the Holy Spirit and as a consequence received the forgiveness of the fullness of God.

Anyone who says that as a Christian you have or could commit the unforgivable sin – knows nothing about the forgiveness of The Lord – end off.



Time for prayer.

This would be a good time to offer prayer either as a group or to individuals in a group, who have perhaps been struggling in this area of forgiveness.

Remember that to be effective ambassadors for the Gospel, then we all must be fully aware of the freedom from guilt that we have as born-again believers in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Spotlight On The Minor Prophets

HOSEA

*Book 4 a-b, of a Christian home-group
discussion course on the 12 Prophets*

BY

James Paris

Illustrations By

[Agnieszka Gorak](#)

THE PROPHET HOSEA

Historical Setting.

The year is around 750 BC.

Israel is under the rule of Jeroboam II and later Pekah depending on actual date. Six Kings ruled during the last tragic 25 years of Israel. Although peace and apparent prosperity reigns, Judgement and chaos are just around the corner.

During Hosea's lifetime Kings priests and all their Aristocratic supporters had abandoned the ways of The Lord and instead followed the idolatrous ways of the Canaanites.

Religion was booming – but it was the religion of the fertility cults involving all kinds of sexual excess and perversion. **Power and Passion – the two greatest enemies of our relationship with God.**

Assyria looms as the executor of The Lord's Judgement on a rebellious and adulterous Nation. In 733, just 17 years after this writing Israel was broken up by the Assyrians then in 722 their capital Samaria was captured and Israel was no more.

The Book

What's in a name? Hosea means 'Salvation' and this is what the Lord offered to Israel if they would turn from their idolatry or adultery.

Main Theme: This book is all about RELATIONSHIP – God's relationship with his people which is falling apart owing to their adulterous behaviour. (Expand later)

Hosea can basically be split into two parts; 1st part chapters 1-3: 2nd part chapters 4-14.

First part READ 1;1-9

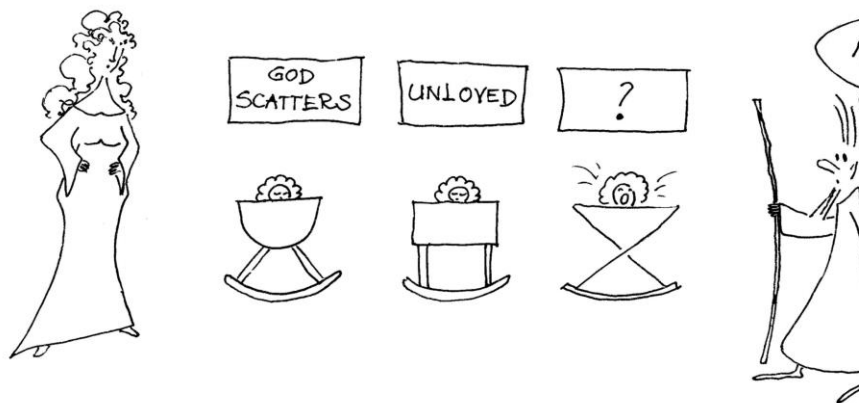
He is instructed to marry a Harlot named Gomer with whom he fathers 3 children, two sons and a daughter.

The Lord names them.

The first child-a son- is named Jezreel meaning 'God Scatters'

Second child, a daughter named 'Lo-ruhamah' meaning 'Unloved' or 'Not Pitied'

Third child a boy named 'Lo-ammi' meaning 'Not my people' or 'not mine' he is understood to be a 'bastard' son.



This is pure theatre! The Lord is here showing Israel in the most graphic way, a way that they would understand, just what he thinks of their behaviour.

He is impressing upon them that they have not only disobeyed his direct commands not to get involved with

foreign gods etc but that they have broken their 'marriage vows' in effect they have 'run off' and played the field.

Chapter 3 sees Hosea instructed to 'love a woman' who is also an adulteress (probably Gomer again) but not to be intimate with her for a number of days to symbolise the time that Israel would be without a King before they repented of their ways and returned to The Lord – who had been loyal and faithful.

Chapter 4 onwards really just spells out the whole allegory in more detail, pointing out Israel's unfaithfulness, the destructive path they are on and The Lords willingness to accept them back to Him and forgive them.

Applications for Today

Relationship!!!!

God wants it – We need it !

The Lord was angry with the Israelites why? Because they were committing adultery!

They had broken the marriage covenant and God was determined to bring them back into relationship READ Hosea 2:16. “It will come about in that day,” declares the LORD THAT you will call Me Ishi, and will no longer call Me Baali.

(Ishi = “My Husband” , Baali = “My Master”) Jeremiah 3:20

Bring it Back..... Why is this relevant to us as Christians? For one – the ‘Church’ or ‘believers’ are frequently referred to as Christ’s ‘Bride’ (2 Cor 11:2) (Eph 5:22-27).

God desires us to know him not just know about him, this is Relationship and in this relationship lies all the promises and power of Almighty God.

Question - Salvation , what is it? We are saved from hell, yes. We have an entrance visa for Heaven, Yes – however, John 3:16 “For God so loved the world.....eternal life” READ John 17:3 “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent”

The secret is in the word “Know” this is the same word ‘ginosko’ that we find in John 14:20- Read. “In that day

you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.”

This goes way beyond a mental knowledge where we can know all **about** Him but not KNOW Him.

Relationships take time and effort (Talk on this area.

Perhaps relate your own experiences on what relationship actually means – good times, and not so good times!)

Only through building a deep relationship with God the Father can we have any lasting effect on the world around us.

We can be well saved and live a life of charitable giving, feeding the poor, dish out tracts, knock on doors – all good works but totally meaningless if we do not have the love of God in our hearts. The Apostle Paul says that Without this love we and all our deeds are nothing (cf 1Cor 13).

(1 John 4:8) God is love (READ) “The one who does not love is not from God for God is love”



An Important Lesson

My own struggle – I was once assured that if I had no real love for the people, The Lord could not use me in Christian work. However after much prayer and seeking on my part, God led me to the prophet Jonah. He had no love for the Ninevites, in fact he wanted The Lord to destroy them

utterly! Yet God used Jonah to bring salvation to the whole city.

The love of God in an individual can be shown in many ways, quite apart from the emotional love that we can all feel at times. Jonah was able to bring the love of God to the Ninevites even though he himself felt no love for them. Of course it is good if you can relate well to the people that you are bringing the good news of the gospel to; if you have a real love in your hearts for them then that is even better. However do not think for an instant that if you do not ‘feel’ anything, God cannot use you. Remember you are bringing the **Love of God** into a situation, through your own presence and willingness to perform His will.

What The Lord revealed to me was this; I have to work on my own relationship with God and through that will come an outpouring of love – “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” (Jn 7:38).

Salvation – believing in Jesus – is just the beginning of our walk in the Lord; the real joy, fulfilment and power of New Testament Christianity lies in our own personal relationship.



We are all a work in progress – but how we progress is up to us!

HOSEA: PART 4b

Relationship Again!

Relationship is achieved when knowledge goes from the Head to the Heart.

I.E. The object of bible study is to discover more ‘about’ the Lord, to accumulate ‘head’ knowledge that we must then transfer to the ‘heart’ - the Spirit bearing witness – thereby truly getting to know The Lord on a much deeper personal level.

Question: So how do we transfer this knowledge from Head to Heart?

First of all we have to look at the three aspects of the human individual; what they are and what they represent in our lives.

Body, Soul and Spirit - Breakdown

Soul:

This is the 5 Senses – see, hear, touch, smell and taste. It is also the seat of our emotions, imaginations, values etc.

Regarding the supernatural things of God, the **Soul** is critical and unbelieving, as a result of the Fall from grace in the garden of Eden.

Spirit:

This is in fact the part of us that has been re-born. Upon salvation our own spirit was completely changed, Sanctified, Justified, Purified in fact ‘Born Again’ “Christ in you the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

Regarding the supernatural things of God, His Spirit in us believes 100% !

Body:

The body is basically a slave to our other two parts, Here's the thing: whichever part of us (soul or spirit) has the upper hand will determine just how the body will react.

The Battle For Supremacy

There is a battle going on constantly between the Soul and the Spirit for dominance over the Body – if there is not, then there should be !

Paul describes this conflict in **Romans 7**. Where he describes in great (if somewhat confusing!) detail, the struggle between the body and the Spirit in his own life. Personally I have always found it something of a comfort that if a 'spiritual giant' such as the Apostle Paul should struggle with such things – then it is no surprise that we all should struggle at times.

In **Romans 12:2** he tells us about "Renewing our mind" what does this mean exactly? In its simplest form it means to listen to the Spirit within, rather than the Carnal voice of the Soul – which is corrupt and against the things of God. **Galatians ch5:16,17**"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh"

"If any man is in Christ he is a new creation, old things have passed away – behold, all things have become new" (**2 Cor 5:17**).

Our body is still the same. If I had a wart on the end of my nose before I was saved, I will still have that wart after I've been saved! Our soul is still the same. I will still have the same carnal lusts and desires as I had before I was saved (albeit they are suppressed by the on-going work of the Spirit in my heart) It is our Spirit that has become new and

which now leads us to seek after the things of God because therein lies life eternal, freedom and victory! (2 Cor 3;17 “Now the **Lord** is the **Spirit**, and where the **Spirit** of the **Lord** is, there is liberty.”)

Back to Question – How do we transfer this ‘head’ knowledge to the ‘heart’?

Good news & bad news!

Bad news first – It takes time and effort on our part ! there are no short cuts to build a proper relationship. “he who seeks the Lord with all his heart shall find Him” (**Jer 29:13**) **Prov 3:6** “In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.”

Good news – God has made the first move! (Talk or meditate on the things that The Lord has done in your own life, perhaps giving testimony of your own salvation experience?)

If we are Christians, we already have the same power that raised Christ from the dead living within us !

IMAGINE - The Lord himself has already taken our hand and led us onto the dance floor, the floor is the World, we let him take the lead and the dance is on !!

How do we know when we have ‘transferred’ from Head to Heart?

When John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he truly was the messiah they were waiting for Jesus said “go and report what you see, the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.” (Matthew 11).

Jesus said to his disciples "These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." (Mark 16:17-18).

In other words we will not only ‘talk the talk’ but we will ‘walk the walk’.

Summary

Do not ever be fooled by the suggestion that the Christian walk would be easy – it is not!

Even a basic study of the epistles will show you that adversity is awaiting you at every turn, as you attempt to share your faith to a largely unbelieving world. It was never easy for the early disciples and it will certainly be no easier for us.

You may or may not believe in the devil. I can only say that if you do not, then you are at an even greater disadvantage, because how can you prepare to fight something that you do not believe exists! The Bible makes it clear “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

For all our ‘advances’ since these times of the early disciples, the battle between the forces of good and evil are the same as they ever were, its just the surroundings that have changed.

As mentioned at the beginning of this work; Hosea is all about relationship, and in particular our relationship with

The Lord. If we get this right, and make Him the focus of our lives, then we are indeed putting on the ‘full armour’ that we see in the book of Ephesians (Eph:6;10).

Spotlight On The Minor Prophets

AMOS

*Book 5 of a Christian home-group
discussion course on the 12 Prophets*

BY

James Paris

Illustrations By

[Agnieszka Gorak](#)

THE PROPHET AMOS

Historical Setting:

The year is around 760-755 BC.

Israel is under the Kingship of Jeroboam II who died 753 BC.

Judah's King at this time is Uzziah.

Amos is a contemporary of the prophet Hosea and so the social and religious problems that Hosea faced were the same.

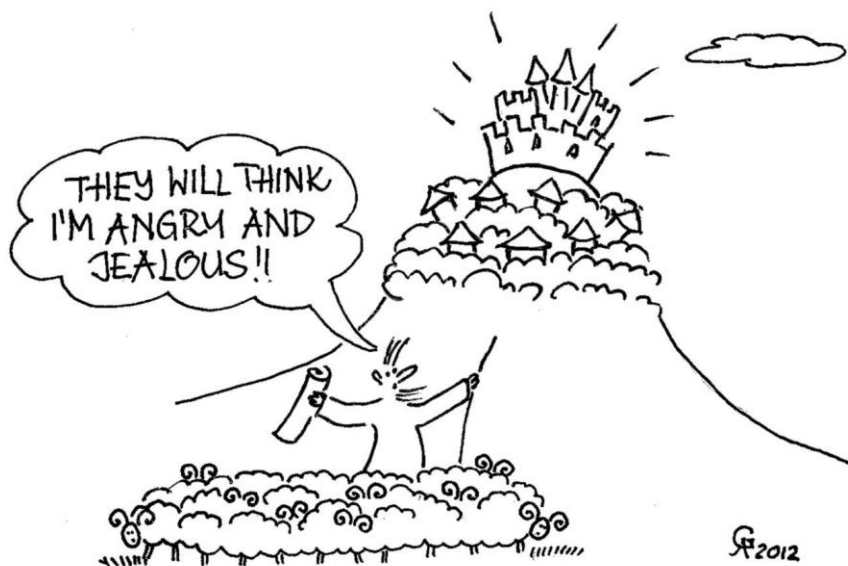
As with Hosea, Amos preached against the social and moral decline of Israel. The worship of Assyrian deities and the huge gulf that had emerged between the 'haves' and the 'have not's'

Assyria and Damascus had been at one another's throats for some years now and so Israel was 'allowed' to prosper in a material sense. They had winter houses and summer houses, houses of Ivory (Amos 3:15). Houses of 'hewn stone' (5:11) and they reclined on "Beds of Ivory" (6:4) They were "at ease in Zion" (6:1)

As in the book of Hosea "Religion" was prospering but Faith in the one true God YHWH was on the decline.

Along comes a farmer called Amos! Not one of the recognized prophets of Israel, nor was he a priest, not even a native of Israel but a farmer called of the Lord from Judah to warn the Northern Kingdom of the coming judgement.

Read Amos: 1:5 – 7:4-16



THE BOOK

What's in a name? Amos means 'Burden bearer'.

Main Theme Ch5:24 Justice and righteousness

In the first two chapters there are eight condemnations introduced by the words "For three transgressions and for four" What's that all about ?

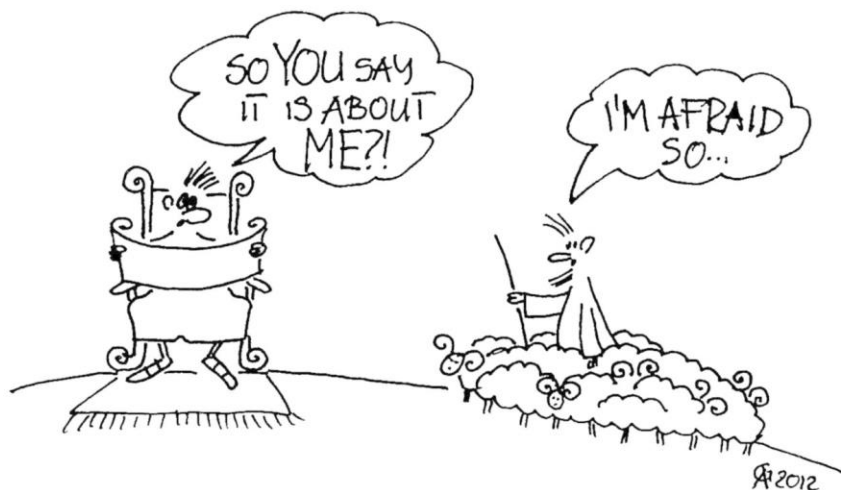
This was to empathise that the Lord was entitled to judge Israel on the basis of not just three transgressions; but four. This pointed to the severity of the crime and the coming judgement.

Read Amos 1:3

Two or Three witnesses were required if a crime worthy of death was to be judged –

READ Deuteronomy 17:6

Four signifies the absolute completeness of the testimony. (The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness) The message of Amos however is not only aimed at Israel and Judah but includes her immediate neighbours as we see from the 'For the three transgressions and for four' Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon and Moab are all included in the Judgement but special emphasis is upon Judah and Israel because they should have known better! – they knew God but rebelled.



As Hosea's main theme was Israel's Adultery against the Lord and therefore about broken relationship; the message of Amos was predominantly about Israel's social corruption and moral decline.

Amos was an ‘unwelcome southerner’ as far as the priests of Israel were concerned and Amaziah rushed to report him to King Jeroboam hoping to get him kicked out of the country.

READ 7:10-17

Message of Hope

Amos ends with a message of hope. **Read Amos 9:11-15**

¹¹ *“In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David,*

And wall up its breaches;

I will also raise up its ruins

And rebuild it as in the days of old;

¹² *That they may possess the remnant of Edom*

And all the nations who are called by My name,”

Declares the Lord who does this.

¹³ *“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord,*

“When the plowman will overtake the reaper

And the treader of grapes him who sows seed;

When the mountains will drip sweet wine

And all the hills will be dissolved.

¹⁴ *“Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel,*

And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them;

They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine,

And make gardens and eat their fruit.

¹⁵ *“I will also plant them on their land,*

And they will not again be rooted out from their land

Which I have given them,”

Says the Lord your God.

After a whole catalogue of denunciations from the prophet Amos, he comes up with 5 great promises to the people of Israel from the Lord Almighty. These promises are of great blessing and restoration for God's people, put in the following terms.

- **The re-building of Israel:** After the separation of Israel following the death of King Solomon, and the subsequent capture and destruction of both nations. God now promises that the day will come when both nations will be restored again as one nation under his rule and the rule of the house of David. This happened in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah when the people returned from exile and re-built the city of Jerusalem.
- **Victory over enemies:** As we have seen the Edomites were old enemies of Israel, and took advantage of them whenever they could. The Lord promises there will come a day when they would have victory over their enemies.
- **Abundance:** There is to come a time of great abundance, when the grapes will grow faster than they can pick them. A time of great prosperity is near at hand.
- **Security:** A time of security when they can enjoy the fruits of their labours, instead of living in fear of their enemies.

- **Lasting Inheritance:** The final verse talks about a time when they will be gathered together as a nation, never again to be dispersed. Many would say that this occurred in 1948 when Israel again became a nation after being dispersed for almost 2,000 years. This was a momentous occasion and the first time in history that any peoples have ever been restored after such a long passage of time.

Applications for Today

Prosperity can be both a blessing and a curse, and the behaviour of the privileged in Israel emphasised this problem.

The ‘upper classes’ of Israel had never had it so good. They had second homes in the country, houses adorned with Ivory, Stone built houses with all the mod cons (a total luxury) slaves, concubines etc, they lacked for nothing and yet as the Lord had to point out through his servant Amos – they were Morally and Spiritually bankrupt.

This is a pattern that seems to apply to all the major world Empires or Kingdoms throughout history. Along with prosperity comes increasing corruption and lawlessness, eventually leading to their downfall.

Things have not changed today. Our western civilisation is by any standards of measure living in a time of great prosperity; and just as in the time of Amos it is very unevenly distributed; but this is exactly what Amos was ranting about – the rich get richer while the poor suffer.

Charity is hard to find and instead the wealthy are oppressing and taking advantage of the poor.

More and more the laws that God has set up are being ignored and instead the masses are persuaded to worship 'mammon' Wealth for Wealth's sake and it doesn't matter who you tread on to get it.

God wants us to prosper (Psalm 1-3), yes; but at any cost?

The trouble with prosperity is that it is too easy to lose sight of the provider – as we look wide eyed at the provision ! We tend to really seek God when we need him to provide for our needs, but then when that provision is met and we are 'comfortable' do we still seek the presence of the Lord with as much gusto ?



Conclusion:

It is right and just to ask the Lord to meet our every need whether it be Health, Wealth or even relationships,

however we must be careful not to let the **Provision** take the place of the **Provider**. And especially not to allow our **prosperity** to outweigh our **charity**!

It is all too easy when we are facing trials of whatever nature, to turn to God in desperate prayer. However when life is good and things are progressing well; it is just as easy to forget to pray at all.

The Christian life is all about keeping the correct balance between Worship and Wealth – or lack of it!

Question for the group:

When is your relationship, or worship time with the Lord at its strongest – when you're in need, or when you have plenty?

Spotlight On The Minor Prophets

MICAH

*Book 6 of a Christian home-group
discussion course on the 12 Prophets*

BY

James Paris

Illustrations By

[Agnieszka Gorak](#)

THE PROPHET MICAH

Historical Setting.

The period is approx 770-710 B.C . although it is generally thought that the book was written just before the fall and destruction of Samaria (the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel) by the Assyrians in 721.

During this time Judah is ruled in turn by a series of kings. Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.

Read Ch1v1

This is also confirmed in Jeremiah 26:17 “.....Micah of Moresheth prophesied during the days of Hezekiah king of Judah”

It is during this period that we see the rise of Assyria as a major world player under the kingship of Tiglath-Pileser 111 (745-727bc) one of the most successful military commanders in world history - and an impending threat to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

Micah's Ministry

What's in a name? Micah means “Who is like unto the Lord”

Little is known about the personal life of Micah, though it is generally thought that he was a man of the soil, and closely connected to the common people – a farmer perhaps. We know that he was from Moresheth in the southern kingdom of Judah (about 25 miles from Jerusalem) and it's worth noting that he was indeed a contemporary of the prophets Isaiah, Amos and Hosea.

As is the way of most of the ‘minor’ prophets, Micah spoke out about the injustice he seen around him. This was a time when the wealthy landowners were growing richer by bribing corrupt judges to fix land deeds in their favour, thereby putting the smaller landowners out of business. The peasants and the landless of course suffered the most during this time.

Read Ch2:1-3.....7:2-3

This in turn led to an overcrowding in the cities as the small farmers looked for employment elsewhere.

Along with this practice there was a general move away from the worship of the true God and the corruption of the covenants he had set aside for them to follow.

The country was being led by corrupt leaders as is emphasised in Ch2:11 *“If a man walking after wind and falsehood had told lies and said ‘I will speak out to you concerning wine and liquor’ He would be spokesman to this people”*

The Lord was saying here- none to subtly- that they were being led by a bunch of lying, thieving drunkards !



The worship of Baal and other pagan deities added to the general backslidden state of the nation. It is in this light that we see the foretold destruction of Samaria-one of the leaders of the conspiracy- in Ch1:2-15.



Both Amos and Hosea had tackled the same questions in the Northern Kingdom. Their answer had been that the Northern Kingdom would not survive. By the time Micah began his ministry, Isaiah of Jerusalem had already been addressing the same questions for 20 years. The Northern Kingdom had already been destroyed, or would be in a matter of months. And as both prophets looked at the Southern Kingdom of Judah, they saw much the same conditions as had existed in the Northern Kingdom.

Judah's future was not certain. But both Isaiah and Micah consistently proclaimed that a change, a return to faithfulness to God, was essential if the Southern Kingdom was to have any future.



This is a hope borne out by these passages referring to a coming saviour and redemption. **Ch4:1-7** and **Ch7:7-8**

"But as for me I will watch expectantly for the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. 8. Do not rejoice over me O my enemy. Though I fall I will rise; though I dwell in darkness the Lord is a light for me."

Applications for Today

Main lesson – The Lord God hates injustice, corruption, false dealing as much as he hates the worship of false idols and the manipulation of his statutes and laws to suit our own ends !

The leaders of Micah's time were doing just that, they twisted the laws of the land to suit themselves, and no doubt called it piety !

Jesus condemned the same attitude in the Pharisees – the religious leaders of his time.

This is a classic example to us that all things must be taken not only on 'face value' but according to the context in which they are written.

I could start a new cult tomorrow – Jims apostles and latter day saints- and easily use the Bible to back it up!

How ? I simply decide what I would like out of my personal cult and then look up all the passages I can find to support my cause – ignoring along the way the context in which they are written and of course all the passages against it.

I might even get a reprint of the bible with some subtly altered passages, endorsed by a corrupt translator who is quite happy to lend his name to it for the parting of some cash !

Lets call it 'The New World Truth Bible'

Throughout history, right up to modern times numerous cults, movements and sects have mis-quoted scripture in order to justify their particular actions. Che Guevara the Marxist revolutionary quoted scripture when it suited the cause; and Charismatic preachers like Jim Jones or David Koresh are just two examples of how the Scriptures can be corrupted to suit evil means. Both Mussolini and Adolph Hitler claimed at various times to be Christian; Hitler promoting his 'positive christianity' which was the Nazi ideal of a Christianity without Jews or any other undesirables, and which was infused with Nazi doctrines.

The Word of God must be ‘correctly divined’ as they used to say. We cannot quote *Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord*. without reading the whole chapter which includes -

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. EPH 5

The leaders of Israel and Judah had grown complacent and corrupt. They had forgotten that they were dealing with a living God who sees all and who will demand recompense. While we have of course a New Covenant and are Justified not by our own works but by the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross we are nevertheless still called on to ***‘do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly before our God’*** Ch6:8

The inherent danger of any society in any age is that power drifts into the hands of corrupt people, who will use this power and influence not for the common good – but to line their own pockets.

The old adage that ‘power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely’ is as applicable now as it has been throughout the centuries from the beginning of time.

There is indeed - as the preacher says in the book of Ecclesiastes – nothing new under the sun, and corruption is as prevalent now as it ever was. It is also true that “all it needs for evil to succeed, is for good people to stand by and do nothing while it is happening.”

Question:

Micah spoke out against the corruption in high places that he witnessed in his time – what examples do you see before you in the times in which we live?

And Just What Can You Do About It ?

Resources

Resources for this work are of course the six individual Minor prophets books done to date; along with my own experiences mixed with of course, internet research. Feedback from the Bible study groups at my own home, where this course was taught, have been invaluable here and a real encouragement to go ahead with this publication. My thanks to everyone involved.

A particular thanks for the great artwork goes to my good friend Agnieszka Gorak. You can see more examples of her unique sense of humor and observations on life at her website <http://myguineapigtails.com>

Recommended Reading

[Know Your Bible:](#) Paul Kent, George Knight

[The Bible Brief:](#) James Paris