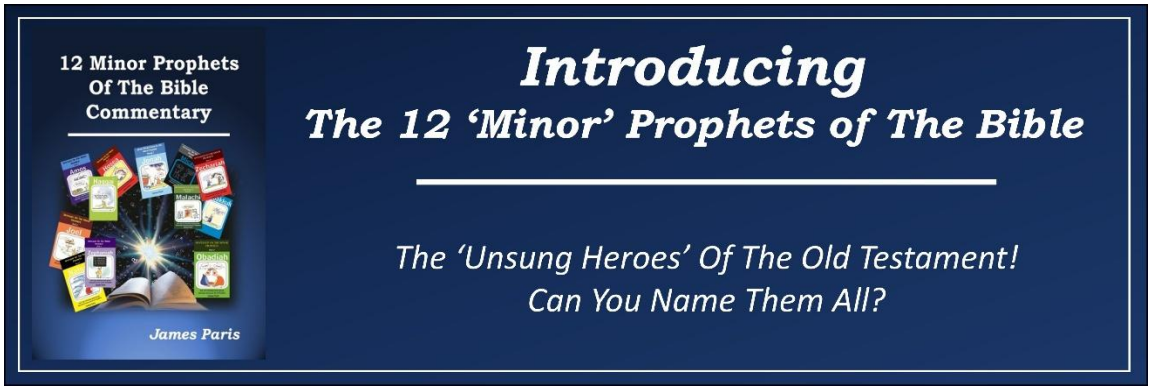
FREE READER SAMPLE
12 Minor Prophets of the Bible



Commentary & Introduction

Explore the **first three studies** — Jonah, Obadiah and Joel — from James Paris's accessible introduction to the twelve Minor Prophets.
A practical starting point for individual Bible study and home Bible study groups.

Welcome to the Free 3-book Sample:

This sample gives you the beginning of the book and the first three Minor Prophet studies: Jonah, Obadiah and Joel.
These books are intended as an introductory outline and a starting point for Bible study — not an exhaustive commentary. Questions are included throughout to encourage thought, discussion and further study.
If you are studying the Minor Prophets with a home Bible study group, this format is designed to give you a straightforward introduction before moving on to more detailed commentaries and resources.

If you find the sample useful, visit the complete book page:

VIEW THE COMPLETE BOOK

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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 Bible 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.

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.
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.

Prophet	Date (B.C.)	Name Meaning	Prophesies to/about	King at Time (Assumption)
Obadiah	845-750	Servant of The Lord	Israel / Edom	Jehoram (Judah) Joram (Israel)
Joel	835-796	Yahweh is God	Judah	Joash (Judah) Jehu/Jehoahaz (Israel)
Jonah	793-753	Dove	Nineveh	Jotham/Ahaz (Judah) Jeroboam/Pekah/Hoshea (Israel)
Hosea	753-715	Salvation	Israel	Jotham/Uzziah (Judah)
Amos	760-755	Burden Bearer	Israel / Judah	Jeroboam/Pekah (Israel)
Micah	770-710	Who is like unto The Lord	Israel / Judah	Jotham/Ahaz/Hezekiah (Judah) Zechariah/Hoshea (Israel)
Nahum	655	Consolation	Nineveh	Manasseh (Judah)*
Zephaniah	625	Yahweh Hides	Judah, Assyria & Nations	Josiah (Judah)
Habakkuk	610	Clings To	Judah / Nations	Josiah/Jehoahaz/Jehoiakim
Haggai	520	My Feast	Judah	N/A
Zechariah	520	Yahweh has remembered	Judah	N/A
Malachi	460-420	My Messenger	Judah	N/A

Book 1: 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 11. Jonah is mentioned in 11 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 to 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?" **Jonah4:10**

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**.

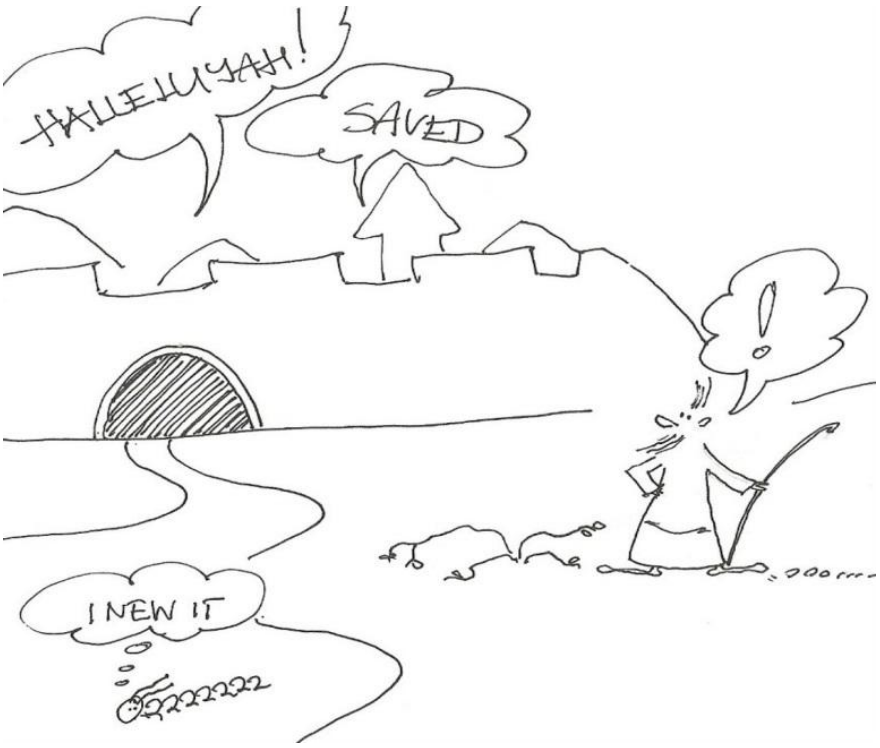
My own experience: I was once told that 'God would not use you if you do not love the people" Utter Nonsense !……..**discuss** - many ways to love people. Jonah being the prime example of someone who did not love the people but God used him anyway.

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 ?


HALLELUYAH!
SAVED
!
I NEW IT

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 !

Book 2: 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.

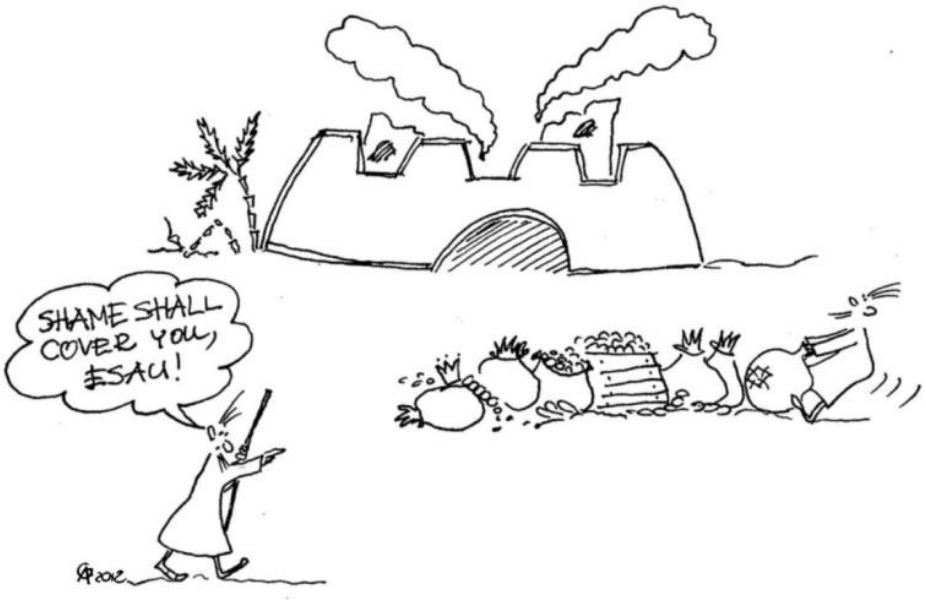
Points of note:-

- '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 takes 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.

Book 3: 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 off 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 if 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.

Ready to explore all 12 of the Minor Prophets?

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