

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

LESSON SERIES

Old Testament Survey - Unit IV
The Books of Prophets during the Northern Kingdom's Decline and Fall
JOEL, JONAH, AMOS, HOSEA, and MICAH

for

CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
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**THE PROPHETS OF THE PERIOD OF
THE DIVIDED KINGDOM****BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS DURING THE
DECLINE AND FALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM, 934-721 B.C.
(PERIOD OF THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE, 885 to 612 B.C.)****THE BOOK OF JOEL**

When placed in chronological order, most conservative Bible scholars agree, Joel is the first of the writing prophets. He was a prophet to Judah probably about the time of the reign of Joash, king of Judah. Possibly he knew both Elijah and Elisha.

Little is known about the personal life of Joel. His name means Jehovah is God. The written prophecy which we have of Joel shows that he saw the eternal reflected in the temporal. For example:

- In the locust plague, he could see the sign of the inevitable day of the Lord (vs. 4-7). NOTE: There is a need to watch as well as pray (Matthew 16:2-3).
- The coming of rain upon the parched earth spoke to Joel of the outpouring of the spirit upon man a thirsty soul (Joel 2:23). NOTE: Peter could have been despised for saying, 'this is that' seeing it was localized (Acts 2:16). Nowhere in Joel's prophecy (chapter 2) does he indicate a time period or even sequence (Joel 2:17-19; 28). For this reason, Joel is very up to date.

The theme of Joel's prophecy is "The day of the Lord (Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14). "The day of the Lord" is an expression that is loaded with meaning. It seems to include not only the coming Millennial Kingdom, but also to include all the judgments which precede the setting up of the Kingdom and the return of Christ.

OUTLINE

1. Literal and Local PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS, chapter 1:1-14
2. Looking to the DAY OF THE LORD (Prelude), chapters 1:15 - 2:32
3. Looking at the DAY OF THE LORD (Postlude), chapter 3
 1. The Great Tribulation, vs. 1-15
 2. The Millennial Kingdom, vs. 16-21

THE BOOK OF JONAH

QUESTION: Is the book of Jonah the Achilles heel of the Bible? It is, if we are to accept the explanations of the critics. The translators of the Septuagint were the first to question

its reasonableness. They set the pattern for the avalanche of criticism which was to follow. To many the book of Jonah is a allegory and not actual events that took place.

Jonah was an historical character. The historical record of the kings of Israel and Judah is accepted as reliable. Jonah is mentioned in

II Kings 14:25 as the son of Amittai. He was an acknowledged prophet. It is not likely that there were two Jonahs, both having a father named Amittai and who were prophets (especially since it is not a common name). Obviously the Lord Jesus considered Jonah a real person, and He accepted the record of the book of Jonah as true (Lk. 11:30; Matthew 12:39-41).

Jonah lived during the reign of Jereboam II. He was really a successor to Elisha as messenger to the ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel. Furthermore, Jonah had a popular message to give in Israel (II Kings 14:26-27). In times of oppression, the promise of prosperous days was most welcome. The fulfillment of his prophecy in the extension of Israel's territory under Jereboam II enhanced his popularity in his homeland.

Now Jonah is commissioned by God to go to Ninevah. Assyria was the last place in the world an Israelite would choose for a missionary venture, so Jonah took off in the opposite direction.

Properly speaking, the book of Jonah is not a prophecy, and seems to be out of step among the other books of prophecy. It contains no prophecy, although Jonah was a prophet. The book of Jonah is the personal account of a major event in the life of Jonah. As the narrator, he told of his experience which was a sign of the greatest event in the **history of the world - the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

Keep in mind that the fish is not the hero of the story - neither is it the villain. The book is not about a fish. The chief difficulty is in keeping a correct perspective. The fish is among the props and does not occupy the star's dressing room. We need to distinguish between the essentials and the incidentals. The incidentals are the fish, the gourd, the east wind, the boat, and Ninevah. The essentials are Jehovah and Jonah - God and man.

SIGNIFICANT SUBJECTS IN THE BOOK OF JONAH

1. This is the one book of the Old Testament **which sets forth the resurrection.** When a wicked and adulterous generation was seeking after a sign, Jesus referred them to the book of Jonah for the message: "As Jonah...so Jesus." (Matthew 12:40).

2. Salvation is not by works. Salvation is by faith which leads to repentance. The book of Jonah is read by the orthodox Jews on the Great Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). One great self-evident truth from the ritual of this day is that the way to God was not by works, but by the blood of a substitutionary sacrifice provided by God. The most significant statement in the book of Jonah is in 2:9: **"Salvation is of the Lord."**

3. God's purpose of grace cannot be frustrated. If Jonah had refused to go to Ninevah the second time, God would have raised up another instrument, or more likely, He would have had another fish ready to give Jonah the green signal toward Ninevah. The book shows God's determination to get His message of salvation to a people who will hear and accept it.

4. God will not cast us aside for faithlessness. When Jonah failed the first time, God did not give him up. The most encouraging words which a faltering and failing child of God can hear are, "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time."

5. God is good and gracious. The most penetrating picture of God in the entire Bible is in 4:2. It is wrong to say that the Old Testament reveals a God of wrath, and the New Testament a God of love. He is no vengeful deity in the book of Jonah!

6. God is the God of the Gentiles. It has been suggested that Romans 3:29 be written over this book. It is the answer to the critics who declaim that the Old Testament presents a local and limited deity, a tribal deity. The book of Jonah is a great book on world missions.

THE BOOK OF AMOS

Amos the prophet ministered during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, and Uzziah, king of Judah. He was a contemporary of Hosea in Israel and of Isaiah and Micah in Judah. The exact time was "two years before the earthquake" (Amos 1:1). This earthquake was of such proportions that Zechariah mentioned it 200 years later (Zechariah 14:5), and identified it as having come during the reign of Uzziah.

Amos prophesied to arouse Israel from her religious apostasy and moral corruption (Amos 5:2-4) and the invasion of Assyria (Amos 3:1,12). Let us observe several things concerning Amos:

- He was not a trained prophet - not one of the schools of prophets (Amos 7:14-15)
- He was mighty in prayer. God showed him impending disaster, and he prayed to God to be merciful on two occasions (Amos 7:1-6).
- He would not be manipulated by the priest Amaziah to take himself and his prophecy to Judah because Israel was not able to receive it (Amos 7:10-13).
- He prophesied in spite of the background of material prosperity during the reign of Jeroboam II (II Kings 14:23-29).

Amos presented God as the ruler of this world, and declared that all nations were responsible to Him. The measure of responsibility is created by the light which a nation has. The final test for any nation (or individual) is found in Amos 3:3: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" In a day of prosperity, he pronounced punishment. The judgment of God awaited nations living in luxury and immorality.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF AMOS

A. Judgment on Surrounding Nations, chapters 1:1-2:3

1. Introduction, 1:1-2

2. Judgment against **Syria** for cruelty, 1:3-5
3. Judgment against **Philistia** for making slaves, 1:6-8
4. Judgment against **Phoenicia** for breaking treaty, 1:9-10
5. Judgment against **Edom** for Revengeful Spirit, 1:11-12
6. Judgment against **Amon** for violent crimes, 1:13-15
7. Judgment against **Moab** for injustice, 2:1-3

B. Judgment on Judah and Israel, chapters 2:4-6:14

1. Judgment against **Judab** for despising the Law, 2:4-5
2. Judgment against **Israel** for immorality and blasphemy, 2:6-16
3. God's charge against the **Whole House of Israel** (12 tribes), chapter 3 (Privilege creates responsibility; the higher the blessing, the greater the punishment.)
4. Israel punished in **Past** for iniquity, chapter 4
5. Israel will be punished in **Future** for iniquity, chapter 5
6. Israel admonished in **Present** to depart from iniquity, chapter 6

C. Visions of Future, chapters 7-9

1. Vision of **Grasshoppers**, 7:1-3
2. Vision of **Fire**, 7:4-6
3. Vision of **Plumbline**, 7:7-9
4. Historic Interlude, 7:10-17 (Personal experience of prophet)
5. Vision of basket of **Summer Fruit**, chapter 8
6. Visions of world-wide **Dispersion**, 9:1-10
7. Vision of world-wide **Re-gathering** and **Restoration** of Kingdom, 9:11-15

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Hosea ministered during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah in Judah. In Israel, Jeroboam II reigned. It was a time of continuous revolution with king after king within a few short years in the Southern Kingdom. Hosea deals mainly, however, with the Northern Kingdom. During the early part of Hosea's life, Israel was enjoying great

material prosperity (II Kings 14:23-29). With this prosperity was also deep religious apostasy and moral corruption.

Hosea was contemporary with Amos, another prophet to Israel, and also contemporary with Micah and Isaiah, prophets to Judah. His ministry extended over half a century, and he lived to see the fulfillment of his prophecy in the captivity of Israel.

The theme of the book of Hosea is seen in Hosea 6:1, "Return unto the Lord." "Return" occurs 15 times in the book.

What Jeremiah was to Judah at the time of the captivity of the Southern Kingdom, Hosea was to Israel, over a century before, at the time of the captivity of the Northern Kingdom. Both spoke out of a heartbreaking personal experience.

Hosea's experience was in the home while Jeremiah's was in the nation. Jeremiah was commanded not to marry. Hosea was commanded to marry a harlot, or, as he brutally stated the case, "a wife of whoredoms." He married Gomer, and she bore him two sons and a daughter. Afterward she played the harlot again, and Hosea put her out of his home. But God commanded him to go and to take this unfaithful harlot and to bring her back into his home and to love her again. "Now," God said in effect to Hosea, "you are prepared to speak for me to Israel - Israel played the harlot, but I love her and will yet bring her back into her homeland."

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF HOSEA

A. Personal - The prophet and his faithless wife, Gomer, chapters 1-3

1. Marriage of Hosea and Gomer, the Harlot, chapter 1
2. Gomer proves faithless; Israel proves faithless; God proves faithful, chapter 2
3. Hosea commanded to take Gomer again, chapter 3

B. Prophetic - The Lord and the Faithless Nation Israel, chapters 4-14

1. Israel plays the Harlot, chapters 4-5
2. Israel (Ephraim) will return in the last days; but presently to be judged for current sins, chapter 6
3. Israel (Ephraim) could escape judgment by turning to God

EIGHT CENTURY PROPHETS IN JUDAH

THE BOOK OF MICAH

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah and prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1). He was younger than Isaiah, and his prophecy might be called a miniature Isaiah or Isaiah in shorthand, since there are striking similarities. His name

means "Who is like Jehovah." The ministry of Micah was directed to both Jerusalem and Samaria (1:1), and he evidently saw the captivity of the Northern Kingdom.

Micah pronounced judgment on the cities of Israel and Jerusalem in Judah. These centers influenced the people of the nation. These were the urban problems that sound very much like our present day problems. Micah condemns violence, corruption, robbery, covetousness, gross materialism, and spiritual bankruptcy. He could well be labeled "The prophet of the city."

Micah's prophecy was against syncretism (that is an attempt to sink or overlook differences). For example, In Israel and Judah, syncretism effected and advocated a compromise between Jehovah and Baal. In Israel after Soloman, Jeroboam had initially instituted worship of a golden calf as god. In Judah it took the form of worshipping God in high places.

Micah prophesied against those whose ministry was activated for money (chapter 3:11, cf. I Tim. 3:3). Micah prophesies the most beautiful description of religion from our viewpoint (chapter 6:6-8). **Notice:** Micah prophesies a most beautiful description of Jesus from God's viewpoint (chapter 5:2). Unlike Jonah, Micah is overwhelmed with the mercy and forgiveness and finality of God, for he declares, "Who is a God like unto Thee?" (chapter 7:17).

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF MICAH

The more natural division of the prophecy is to note that Micah gave three messages, each beginning with the injunction, "Hear."

1. Message One - "Hear, all ye people", chapter 1:2 - 2:12.
2. Message Two - "Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel" (leaders of Israel), chapter 3:1 - 5:15.
3. Message Three - "Hear, contend (plead)", pleading with Israel to repent and return to God, chapter 6:1-7:20.

END of Lesson

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