

Minor Prophets : Historical Background

The prophets in the Old Testament were without question some of the most radical men for God.

Much of the OT is comprised of the writings of these men who we call prophets. The writings that are longer we call major prophets and writings that are shorter we call minor prophets.

The definition of a 'prophet' according to the Hebrew term :

- Roeh - used 11 times, meaning 'to see' also called seer
- Chozeh - used 22 times, man with a vision from God
- Nabi - used over 300 times, meaning to announce or one who speaks for God.

A prophet was a person who spoke (and / or wrote) the words of God to the people. They were called men of God. They spoke mostly to the needs of their own people, strongly renouncing sin.

Sometimes their messages carried predictive elements like the coming of the Messiah.

Sometimes their messages were conveyed through symbolic language.

By the time that the minor prophets wrote, the history of the Israelite had brought them through some very great times, but also some very bad times.

After the Israelites had come to the promised land, the land was divided among various tribes. Then they went through about 400 years of being ruled by judges.

Following this period, Saul, David and Solomon ruled as Kings for a period of 120 years (40 years each).

Immediately after the death of Solomon, the Kingdom divided into two rival kingdoms. It was during this period that the minor prophets wrote, which was around 900BC - 400BC.

During this period Israel (Northern) and Judah (Southern) regions went through political instability and national disgrace. Each minor prophet wrote concerning that time and the issues of that country.

Other Historical Nations Of That Time

1. Egypt

At the time of the establishment of the Jewish nation, Israel (1500BC), the world power was Egypt. They remained powerful for hundreds of years.

2. Assyria

At the time of the division of the Jewish nation, Assyria was the world power. It was this nation which took Israel (northern kingdom) into captivity in about 722 BC. Many of the minor prophets like Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Nahum and Zephaniah did their preaching and writing during this time (Although Joel and Obadiah are more difficult to date).

3. Babylon

The nation of Babylon conquered the Assyrians and became the next dominant world power. Habakkuk was written during this period. The Babylonians conquered Judah (southern kingdom) and destroyed the temple around 586 BC.

4. Persia

The final nation which dominated the time of the OT was the nation of Persia. It was during this period that Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi prophesied. During this time the Jewish captives were to return to their land, rebuild the temple and prepare themselves for the next stage of God's work among men - the coming of the Messiah 400 years later.

God used these minor prophets to prepare the nation for the ultimate point in history through which we too are being blessed!

Approximate Dates Of Minor Prophets

Assyrian Period

Obadiah	-----	850 BC
Joel	-----	830 BC
Jonah	-----	780 BC
Amos	-----	760 BC
Hosea	-----	750 BC
Micah	-----	730 BC

Babylonian Period

Zephaniah	-----	630 BC
Nahum	-----	620 BC
Habakkuk	-----	610 BC

Persian Period

Haggai	-----	520 BC
Zechariah	-----	520 BC
Malachi	-----	440 BC

Day 1 : Book of Hosea [Hosea 1-3]

Introduction

- Hosea was called to prophesy to the northern kingdom (Israel).
- Hosea's work lasted for nearly 40 years (from 760-720BC). The nation of Israel was in serious trouble because of her sins.
- All the kings of Israel were evil, because they all continued idol worship.
- However, in the midst of this incredible sinful time, Hosea communicates God's love for Israel. The depth of God's love is most clearly seen in Hosea.
- In chapters 1-3, the stage of the book is set by comparing the relationship of Hosea to Gomer with that of God to Israel. In chapters 4-14, the calamitous results of rejecting this kind of love are described.

God's Marriage To Israel (Hos.1:1-3:5)

The setting is about Hosea and Gomer. God demanded a very challenging step of faith for Hosea (1:2-3). The adulterous wife may have been an immoral woman even before marriage. God tries to show how deeply hurt he was because of Israel. Israel was married to God. Yet, she had been terribly unfaithful to the relationship. The spiritual adultery of which she was guilty was an overall type of idolatry, but described in different forms.

- The fundamental form of idolatry was literally constructing statues and bowing before them.
- Various parts of idolatrous practices involved worshipping fertility goddesses, which included acts of sexual immorality.
- Another form of idolatry was materialism.
- Another form of idolatry was relying on her own strength or on other nations rather than trusting God.

After Gomer deserted Hosea (ch.3), God required him to buy her back. God shows how he longs to reclaim Israel as his wife, in spite of rampant unfaithfulness. The forgiveness of God is amazing!

What forms of idolatry is visible in our lives? Are we relying on our own strength or on our leaders rather than trusting God? What place does money have in our hearts? Is our relationship with God pleasing to Him or hurting Him? God loves us and longs to have an intimate relationship with us.

Application : Write down few recent painful experiences in your life and how you got over it.

"...neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord - Rom.8:38-39"

Day 2 : Book of Hosea [Hosea 4-5]

God Against Israel (Hos. 4:1-19)

After much warning through many prophets, God reaches a point of discipline. He brings his charge against Israel. God's charge was :

- No faithfulness, no love (v.1).
- Cursing, lying, murder, stealing and adultery (v.2).
- Lack of knowledge of God (v.6).
- Priest (leaders) ignored the law of God (v.6).
- Idolatry (v.12).

God always first appeals to us by His kindness, hoping that we would repent. (Rom.2:4). But once we refuse, the next step is discipline.

However, the Israelites refused to listen to God through his prophets even after the discipline came as a consequence. So God starts to judge Israel. Judgment follows discipline.

Are we quick to listen to God even when things are going smoothly? Do we need a disaster to change? What are some of the lessons we have learnt from the hard knocks of life?

Judgment Against Israel (Hos. 5:1-15)

- Israel was reaching a point of no return (v.4).
- Their arrogance was so great (v.5).
- So God was to withdraw Himself from them (v.6).
- God waits for them to repent and admit their guilt (v.15).

Our repentance is turning to God. Admitting our sins and earnestly seeking God.

Have we reached a point of no return? Have we taken God's discipline lightly?

Returning to God is the best thing we can do, because He can heal us and restore us. His grace and mercy is so great that He forgives even Israel.

Application : What motivates you to repent?

“Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed - Rom. 2:4,5”

Day 3 : Book of Hosea [Hosea 6-7]

Israel Unrepentant (Hos. 6:1-7:16)

The Lord pleads with the Israelites to return to the Lord. God wants them to count on his forgiving nature and his grace. See the words used to describe the forgiving nature of God.

- He will heal us (v.1).
- He will bind up our wounds (v.1).
- He will revive us (v.2).
- He will restore us (v.2).
- He will let us live in His presence (v.2).

But Israel seems to be unrepentant. God says “I desire mercy, not sacrifice”. This Scripture was quoted by Jesus to the Pharisees. Their religion was not impressive to God. God desires for us to be loving rather than our religious commitments!

Israel’s unrepentance leads to judgment(v.11). God remembers their evil deeds (7:2). Sometimes we think God is lenient and think God forgets. The Scriptures show that God doesn’t let sin go undealt or unpunished.

One of sin’s tragedy is that it causes us to think that it can be hidden. It cannot. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. The only escape from judgement for sin is repentance and turning to God through the Jesus Christ.

God compares Israel to a flat-cake not turned over!(7:8). This means Israel is half-baked or in other words not mature.

God also compares Israel to a dove, that is easily deceived and senseless. It just shows how easily they are led astray or quick to sin. God longs to redeem them. (v.13).

Are we quick to be led astray? Can we be easily deceived? Where do we run to when we are in need of help? Come, let us return to the Lord, He will heal us!

Application : Are there any areas in your life in which you are struggling to change? What steps are going to take to change from those?

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness - I Jn.1:9”

Day 4 : Book of Hosea [Hosea 8]

Reaping A Whirlwind (Hos.8:1-14)

It is through little things like forgetting God and then trusting in our own resources rather than in Him that we end up in destruction.

Israel has forgotten his Maker(v.14). Forgetting God doesn't mean literally forgetting, but rather means "neglecting". God was not the first priority in their lives.

Five sins resulted from Israel forgetting God :

- *The breaking of God's covenant (v.1-3)* : The word covenant means agreement. It is essentially personal. Breaking covenant in other words means breaking God's heart. Disobedience is breaking God's heart.
- *Without God's consent or approval (v.4)* : They would choose leaders(kings) without direction from God. And their choice would be based on foolishness and sin. We cannot see into human hearts. We only look at the external. God knows the hearts of people. And once sinful leaders were chosen, the leadership becomes ungodly and corrupt.
- *Idolatry (v.4-6)* : Bad leaders led to bad religion. God condemns the worship of the "calf-idol".
- *Alliances with ungodly nations (v.8-10)* : They have gone up to Assyria like a wild donkey wandering alone! Israel failed to turn to God who was their Saviour and Helper.
- *Construction of false altars (v.11-13)* : God holds Israel responsible for the judgment they are about to face. They sowed a wind and reaped a whirlwind.

What are we sowing today? Are you putting God as your first priority? Are we turning to God in times of trouble? Let us keep our covenant with God!

Application : Pray for the Christians / Leaders to have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way.

"Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace...Heb. 13:7-9"

Day 5 : Book of Hosea [Hosea 9-10]

Punishment For Israel (Hos. 9:1-10:15)

It was probably (we can't say for sure) during one of the harvest festivals that Hosea comes with this announcement. There would have been feasting, dancing and joy and the last thing the Israelites would have thought of was the message in 9:1-5. The message was simple. God has forsaken them because they have forsaken God!

The second section of this chapter 9 contains a proof, that judgment was coming. Hosea spoke of the coming invasion in clear and passionate terms, but they laughed and said he was a fool and crazy (9:7-8).

Sin separates us from God. When we are separated by sin, the spiritual perception that comes from God is taken away and what follows is blindness and spiritual deafness. When God removes himself from us, we are left with no hope!

In chapter 10, Israel is compared to a vine, God's choice vineyard. It is termed as spreading vine. Her fruit is not what God desires! She bears fruit of idolatrous religion, fruit for herself.

Israel's heart is deceitful(v.2) or in other words hypocritical. Their intention were one but actions were different!

As in marriage, what God desired was faithfulness. Israel claimed they worshiped Jehovah and that Jehovah was their true God, but their false altar and "sacred stones" were multiplying.

And now Israel was reaching a point of divorce! Are we reaching a point of divorce (unfaithfulness) in our relationship with God? Is God really the King and Lord of our hearts? Is He our first love? Are we bearing the fruit that He desires?

Is our heart hot for God?

Let us remember Jesus' promise, "remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing".

Application : What are some godly qualities you are known for? Ask three of your close friends about what godly qualities they see in you?

"...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control - Gal.5:22"

Day 6 : Book of Hosea [Hosea 11-12]

God's Love For Israel (Hos.11:1-11)

After a series of discipline messages (Hos.4-10), God reminds them of his love for them. V.1-4 tell of Israel's past. God compares Himself to a father who has called and trained a son; but the son has turned out to be unresponsive and ungrateful. God also reminds them that they became His son by adoption and not by birth.

Similarly in Christ, we are adopted as God's sons and daughters. Like the prodigal son we were saved by God's grace and compassion. Without the mercy of God we would surely perish.

We see the full emotions of God as a father not willing to give up his child.

God is a God of justice but he also is a God of love. Sin must be punished, but God is filled with compassion. It is at the cross that the love of God and the justice of God can be satisfied.

Israel's Sin (Hos.12:1-14)

This chapter starts off by God's charge against Judah(v.2). Judah is not as far along the slippery path of decline as Israel. Nevertheless she is on that path. And if she doesn't repent, her doom will be as certain as the doom of Israel.

So much for Judah, what about Israel (Ephraim)? She is dishonest, rich and arrogantly confident that no one will ever be able to prove her guilty of any sin (v.7-8). She will be driven from God's land.

- This happened in spite of God's gracious dealings with His people. God had revealed Himself to them through prophets(v.10).
- He delivered them(v.9).
- And he cared for them (v.13) but they rebelled.

Are we taking the grace of God for granted in our lives? Are we on the path of spiritual decline or are we getting renewed day by day?

Application : List out some areas in your life when you felt the love of God in spite of your shortcomings.

"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus - Rom.3:22-24"

Day 7 : Book of Hosea [Hosea 13-14]

The Lord's Anger Against Israel (Hos.13:1-16)

God talks of Israel as dead(v.1). God is talking about their death in spirit, by worshipping that which is not God. What will follow is the death of the physical nation. The nation will be taken over by their enemies and will be destroyed.

And where does this destruction come from? Hosea graphically portrays how the one who previously has preserved the nation now brings judgment on it. God is the ultimate destroyer!

- They are reminded of the deliverance from Egypt by God's hand. God cares for them (v.5-6).
- Nevertheless the people forgot God. Now, He who has been their deliverer will become their destroyer(v.9).
- The next message represents the invasion that was to come. (v.15-16). It is from the Lord that destruction comes.

Repentance To Bring Blessing (Hos.14:1-9)

The book of Hosea ends with God's appeal to Israel to return to Him. In a sense it is God's last word. God appeal for confession and true repentance.

Repentance also involves depending on God's grace(v.2). Having called on the people genuinely to repent of their sins, God now promises a full measure of restoration. God promises three things:

- He will heal their waywardness (v.4).
- He will love them (v.4).
- And He will cause His people to prosper again (v.5-7).

Does the scope of this promise of God surprise us? In Him we have beauty, strength, value, delight and abundance.

Hosea ends with an appeal to those who have wisdom to discern the truthfulness of God's words. Sin brings death but obedience is the path of life, this is true even today. The ways of the Lord are always right, the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them!

Application : List out some of the blessings you have received from God since you became a Christian?

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves - Eph. 1:3-6"

Day 8 : Book of Joel [Joel 1-3]

Introduction

Joel was a prophet to the southern nation of Judah. He has prophesied some very destructive discipline from God and has also given some very developed Messianic prophecies. Joel is very difficult to date, we assume the date to be around 830 BC.

- The prophet's name means the "Lord is God" or Yahweh is God
- Joel tells of an extremely serious locust plague which was brought on by God and warns that even more serious discipline from God will follow if the people do not repent from the heart
- His call to repentance emphasizes on a need to rend their hearts and not just an outward show!
- His most famous passage is the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-30).

A Call To Mourn (Joel 1:1-2:11)

Joel warns the people by describing a locust invasion.

- He first calls on the elders, since they are the leaders of the people (v.3) to repent.
- He then warns the drunkards (v5) and farmers (v11)
- His last group are the priests (v.13-20)

The repentance was to involve a return to God with their whole heart, completed with fasting, weeping and mourning. They were to rend their hearts and not their garments (2:12-13). As always, the temptation of people was to trust their outward religious observances more than focussing on their hearts. Are our hearts turned towards God? Are we just rending our garments or are we really broken in our hearts? Which is more important the activity or the attitude? Which one are we focussed on?

Blessings Will Follow Discipline (Joel 2:12-3:21)

- Immediate relief from the plague (2:13-27).
- The outpouring of the Spirit (2:28-32) [The coming of the spirit made possible the indwelling of the Holy Spirit for everyone who repented and was baptized for forgiveness (Acts 2:38-39)].
- The restored fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem (3:1-16a).
- The ultimate blessing was the coming of the Messiah (3:17-21).

Blessing always follow God's discipline. Or in other words, God gives grace to the humble but opposes the proud. We all desire restoration. But restoration comes through repentance. When we turn to God, He blesses by abundantly.

Application : Pray through Ps.51.

"This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word - Isa. 66:2"

Day 9 : Book of Amos [Amos 1-2]

Introduction

- Amos, whose name meant “burden-bearer”, was from the southern kingdom, from the city of Tekoa.
- Before his commission to prophesy, he was both a shepherd and a sycamore-fig tree keeper(7:14).
- His prophecy was during the reign of Jeroboam II.
- Materialism was the main concern of God in this book.
- Materialism was a concern of God even before the Israelites came to the promised land. (Deut. 6:10-12, 8:6-14). When things are going well materially, the challenge of staying focussed spiritually is not easy.

Judgment On Israel’s Neighbors (Amos 1:1-2:5)

- Damascus-their sin was the cruelty towards the inhabitants of Gilead (tribes of Gad and Reuben). God’s judgment was destruction and captivity.
- Gaza (philistia) - their sin was engaging in slave traffic and the judgment was total devastation.
- Tyre - their sins was also slave trading
- Edom - their sin was hatred for their relatives
- Ammon - their sin was ripping open pregnant women
- Moab - their sin was burning the king of Edom’s bones.

The interesting thing to notice here is that nothing escapes the notice and the judgment of God. It is quite relieving to know that every wickedness will be dealt with.

Judgment Of Judah And Israel (Amos 2:6-16)

- Judah - her sin was rejection of the Law of God in favor of heathen idolatry.
- Israel - several sins are listed (a) Social injustice (b) Immorality (prostitution) (c) Idolatry (worshipping other gods) (d) Rebellion against God
- Their judgment was their inability to flee when destruction comes upon them.
- This prophecy was fulfilled by the Assyrians in 722BC when the northern kingdom of Israel was taken as captives (2 Ki. 17:5-23).

God was not only concerned with His covenant people but also with the surrounding nations. God is the sole and the righteous judge. God holds men accountable for their actions. Are we willing to let the word of God persuade us to do what is right?

Application : What could be God’s greatest concern for your present life?

“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man

- Eccl. 12:13”

Day 10 : Book of Amos [Amos 3-4]

The Doom Of Israel (Amos 3:1-15)

In this lesson we shall direct our attention to the “sermons” in the following chapters. The Lord has spoken against Israel (3:1-2) :

- With whom He has had a special relationship.
- Whom He now will punish for their sins.
- The Lord does nothing unless He reveals it by one of His prophets(3:7-8).
- Like a lion that has roared, God has spoken and Amos must prophecy!
- Ashdod and Egypt are called to witness Israel’s wickedness (3:9-10).
- Israel will be plundered by an adversary (3:11-15).

Are we quick to listen to the words of God? God reveals His plan to man through His word. But do we trust His plan and His promises? Who can stand the wrath of God? Only those who stand with Christ. Only in Him will anyone be sheltered from the inevitable judgment of God.

The Depravity Of The Women Of Israel (Amos 4:1-3)

The women of Israel are called the “cows of Bashan”, they are insatiable.

- They were oppressing the poor and needy (4:1).
- Crying out for wine (4:2).

God sarcastically tells them to worship their false gods at Bethel and Gilgal (4:4-5). This was designed to show how far they have departed from God. They failed to respond to God’s efforts to get them to repent.

- Famine (4:6).
- Drought (4:7-8).
- Pestilence (4:9).
- Plague and war (4:10).
- Earthquakes (4:11).

God used natural calamities to get their attention. Why didn’t they heed God’s efforts? Perhaps, they assumed that it was just coincidence. Are we open to the possibility that God is trying to teach us something through every calamity?

After failing to respond to many warnings, they must prepare to meet their God now, who is bringing judgment upon them.

Application : Imagine you are in one of the above mentioned calamities, how would you feel?

*“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you
- I Pet. 5:6-7”*

Day 11 : Book of Amos [Amos 5-6]

A Lamentation For Israel (Amos 5:1-17)

Israel is called to lament because of her coming fall (v.1-2). And only a remnant will be left (v.3). But God calls them to repentance, for there is still hope!

- Seek the Lord and live (v.4-7).
- Seek Him who is all powerful (v.8-9).
- He knows your many sins (v.10-13).
- Seek that which is good, perhaps God will be gracious (v.11-15).

Are we seeking God today? Does our life show that we are seeking God? We continue to live by seeking God. And seeking God also means we seek good not evil.

The Day Of The Lord (Amos 5:18-6:14)

The day of the Lord is coming. There will be wailing in the streets and fields.

- The day of the Lord is not be desired by sinful men, for it will be a day of darkness (v.18-20).
- God is repelled by their show of religion, when there should be righteousness and justice. (v.21-24).
- For they have never really served God, even in the wilderness (v.25-26).
- Therefore they will be taken “beyond Damascus” (v.25-27).
- Woe to those who are at ease, trusting in Samaria and thinking they will defend (6:1-2).
- Woe to those who say the day of the Lord is far off. They bark in their luxury while their brethren are afflicted (6:3-6).
- They shall be among the first to go into captivity (6:7).
- The destruction is coming because God hates their pride (6:8).
- A destruction where men will be scarce and their houses destroyed (6:9-11).
- They perverted justice and righteousness, priding themselves in their own strength(6:12-13).

In our lives too the day of the Lord is coming! It is a day of judgment. It is a day when we have to give account to God for our lives. How will we face that day? What would be our defence? The call to repentance is for us too! Seek the Lord through faith and obedience. “Seek the Lord and live”!

Application : Decide to make a change in our prayer life this week. (kneeling down, early in the morning, going out walking, special location....)

“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to - Luke 13:24”

Day 12 : Book of Amos [Amos 7-9]

The Vision Of The Locusts (Amos 7:1-3)

Amos receives a series of five “visions”. The vision of the locust - the Lord shows Amos a swarm of locust devastating the crops. Amos cries out on behalf of Jacob (Israel). The Lord hears and relents so that the locust plague will not happen.

The Vision Of Fire (Amos 7:4-6)

The Lord shows Amos a fire consuming the “great deep” and the territory. Once again Amos cries out on behalf of Jacob. The Lord hears again and relents from bringing the conflagration upon Israel.

The Vision Of The Plumbline (Amos 7:7-9)

The Lord is standing on a wall with a plumbline in hand. The Lord explains He is setting a plumbline in the midst of Israel and will now bring destruction upon the places of idolatrous worship and the house of Jeroboam. Amaziah, priest of Bethel (centre of idolatrous worship) accuses Amos of conspiracy against Jeroboam king of Israel (7:10-11). Amaziah tells Amos to leave Bethel and go back to his own country of Judah (7:12-13). But Amos defends his prophetic mission (7:14-15) and then Amos prophesies against Amaziah and Israel! (7:16-17).

The Vision Of The Summer Fruit (Amos 8:1-14)

Amos is shown a basket of summer fruit (evidently quite ripened). The Lord reveals that Israel’s end is near and is ripe for judgment.

The Vision Of The Lord By The Altar (Amos 9:1-15)

The altar shall be destroyed and none shall escape (9:1-4). The kingdom will be utterly destroyed. The restoration of the remnant is foretold (9:11-12). Judgment is not the last word with God. There is hope (remnant) after judgment.

One of the lessons that God has used Israel to teach is that obedience is always followed by blessings and that disobedience is always followed by judgment. This applies to Israel, but it also applies to individuals, and to the Church. Will Christians humble themselves and pray and seek God, turning from their wicked ways? If so, God will bless them. If not, they will be judged. The Holy God demands holiness in those who follow Him.

Finally, there is the lesson of grace. God is gracious in His dealings with His people. He is gracious with Israel. He is also gracious with the Church. The question is, will we respond to God’s grace or turn from it?

Application : What is your vision as a disciple in God’s Kingdom?

“For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him - II Chr.16:9”

Day 13 : Book of Obadiah [Obadiah 1]

Introduction

- Obadiah's name means 'servant of the Lord'.
- Nothing is known about this prophet except what is found in this small book of 21 verses. (It is the shortest book in the Hebrew Bible).
- This book is about God's word about the Edomites, who were descendants of Esau.
- The hatred and jealousy of the Edomites toward the Israelites begins when Esau sold his birthright to Jacob and was later tricked (Gen. 25-27).
- When the Israelites came out of Egypt (the Exodus), the conflict between the two nations began (Num 20). According to Obadiah's prophecy, the nation of Edom was to be destroyed forever (v10) and by 100 AD they had disappeared completely!

Pride Goes Before A Fall (Obadiah 1-14)

- Their pride deceived them to thinking that their destruction would be impossible.
- They took pride in their location (v.3-4) : 'clefts of the rocks', 'home on the heights'.
- They took pride in their wise men (v8).
- They took pride in their warriors (v9).

Pride always carries within itself its own seeds of destruction. It is like a time bomb that Satan places in our pockets. What is scary is the length of the fuse! It may come quickly or very slowly. But it will always come if not before the Day of Judgement, then on that day!

In which ways are we being prideful? Do we look down at others? Or do we rejoice over the misfortune of others?

We Reap What We Sow (Obadiah 15-21)

This is a universal truth. During every age it is true. We reap what we sow. The Edomites reaped what they sowed.

What are some things that we reap today because of what was sown yesterday? How can we change tomorrow? By sowing righteousness today! The world tempts to buy now, pay later. But God's way is always to pay now, reap tomorrow.

Application : In which ways are you proud?

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you - Jam. 4:6-8"

Day 14 : Book of Jonah [Jonah 1-2]

Introduction

- Jonah means “dove”. Although he was a prophet in the northern kingdom of Israel, his divine mission was to preach against Assyria’s capital city, Nineveh.
- His message was very simple “forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned” (3:4).
- Jesus quotes this minor prophet in Mt.12:38-41, Mt.16:4.
- This book is also unique in its miraculous events, the most notable of which is Jonah being swallowed by a large fish. These miraculous elements have caused liberal scholars to allegorize the contents of this book. However, the account is obviously intended to be literal and Jesus certainly took it to be historical.

Running Away From God (Jonah 1:1-17)

- God commands Jonah to go and preach (v.1-2).
- Jonah decides to disobey and runs in opposite direction (v.3-4).
- The ride away from God wasn’t that enjoyable. He faces a storm.
- More than the courage of the prophet the issue was the prejudice towards non-Jews.

In which ways are you running away from God? Are you facing any storm in your life now? Is it because you are running away from God? Disobedience is quite costly. We have to pay our fare to against God! It is easier to run towards God than to run away from Him.

Running Towards God (Jonah 2:1-10)

- The prophet begins to get in touch with his disobedience.
- The swallow by a big fish (probably a whale) is a miracle.
- Jonah prays to God from the belly of the fish. We can pray to God from any place. In his prayer he doesn’t blame the sailors for reaching this point, but recognizes that God is behind the whole episode (v.3).
- He humbles himself and repents.

Are we in touch with our disobedience? Do we blame people for whatever bad things happening? Do we understand that God is behind everything? Are we honest in our prayers?

Application : What are few expectations from Scriptures you feel challenged to obey?

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? - Luke 9:23-25"

Day 16 : Book of Micah [Micah 1-2]

Introduction

- Micah means ‘who is like Yahweh’.
- Micah was from a rural setting (Moresheth Gath) who came to Jerusalem to preach against it.
- Micah wrote with a few messianic prophecies.
- He prophesied during the reign of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah Kings of Judah.

Judgment Against Samaria And Jerusalem (Micah 1:1-16)

- Idolatry practiced (1:3-7, 6:16).
- Rich exploiting the poor (2:1-2,8-9).

We can see how God leaves his holy temple and comes out to do battle himself! (1:3).

Micah sees the judgment coming and crisis for Judah. He is calling the people to mourn as he can see them going to exile. (1:16).

Man’s Plans And God’s Plans (Micah 2:1-5)

Men were busy making their own evil plans. Probably their hearts were so hardened that they did not even realize how evil their plans were. But they forgot that God also does make plans. God was planning a disaster against them (2:3).

False Prophets (Micah 2:6-13)

We see that the false prophets were terrible.

- They did not want to hear anything about the discipline of God for their sins (2:6).
- They loved evil and hated good. The people wanted to hear prophets prophecy plenty of beer and wine (2:11).

Do we take God’s word seriously in our lives? The Scriptures warns us that the work of Satan could be displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

Application : What kind of teachings are you attracted the most to and why?

“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths - 2 Tim. 4:3,4”

Day 19 : Book of Nahum [Nahum 1-3]

Introduction

- Nahum's name means 'consolation' or 'comforter'. But his message wasn't one of comfort for Nineveh. His prophecy about Nineveh was of destruction.
- This city had repented at the preaching of Jonah over one hundred years earlier, but now her sins were bringing about her end at the hand of God
- This great city fell in 612 BC and the nation of which she was capital, Assyria, came to a complete end a few years later. This book was just before that time.
- Nahum is one of the seven OT books not quoted or echoed in the NT (The others are Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs and Obadiah).

Fall Of Nineveh (Nahum 1:1-7)

- God is a jealous God and one whose justice demands vengeance (1:2).
- He is slow to anger but will not leave the guilty unpunished (1:3).
- He controls nature and can use it to express his judgements (1:3-6).
- His power and sovereignty are a blessing to those trust him. He is a refuge in times of trouble (1:7).

The Sins Of Nineveh (Nahum 1:8-3:19)

- Plotted evil against God (1:11).
- Full of idolatry (1:14).
- Full of lies and plunder (3:1).
- Seduced and abused people (3:4).

Most of the prophesy is a poetic description of the bloody fall of this city. The only comfort offered in the books was that provided to God's people, that their bitter oppressors will eat the fruit of his own ways, that he would finally reap the whirlwind that he deserved before God.

The messenger who brought news of Assyria's destruction would be received as the deliverer of glad tidings and the proclaimer of peace (1:15). The book closes with these words, 'everyone who hears the news about you claps his hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?' According to the word of the Lord, the city completely disappeared from men's sight for centuries. God spoke - and it took place!

Application : Spend some time with a disciple who is struggling in his faith and pray with him.

"Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble. The LORD will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes. The LORD will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness - Ps.41:1-3"

Day 20 : Book of Habakkuk [Habakkuk 1-3]

Introduction

- His name means ‘embrace.’
- Habakkuk ministered to Judah [Southern Kingdom].
- This book takes a form of dialogue between God and the prophet. He asks God how long before God deals with the sins of his own nation. Then he questions how God can use a more wicked nation to punish his own people.
- He ends by writing a poem understanding God’s answers in the end.

Habakkuk’s First Question (Hab. 1:1-4)

The prophet was very upset about the evil among his people. He wanted to know why God wasn’t intervening.

God’s Answer (Hab. 1:5-11)

God talks about how the Babylonians were to punish Judah. Though the Babylonians were wicked (v.6-11). God was going to use them as a tool of judgment!

Habakkuk’s Second Question (Hab. 1:12-2:1)

How can God use such a wicked nation in this way? Habakkuk was shocked at God’s answer. Habakkuk pictured as a watch man waiting for God’s answer.

God’s Answer (Hab. 2:2-20)

- God knew the nature of the Babylonian
- God’s answer was “the righteous will live by his faith” (v.4).
- Faith helps us persevere through difficult times.
- God talks of a series of five woes of the Babylonians

Habakkuk’s Psalm (Hab. 3:1-19)

- Once the prophet understands God’s ways he stands in awe of God and His plan.
- He recounts the great miracles brought by judgments to accomplish His righteous purposes.

We might not be able to understand God’s plans always, but we can still submit and trust Him always!

Application : What are some events in your life you are not able to understand? How you have responded to that?

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ... Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus - Phil. 4:4-7”

Day 21 : Book of Zephaniah [Zephaniah 1-3]

Introduction

- This prophet's name means 'he whom the Lord has hidden.'
- In 1:1, he traces his ancestry back for four generations to King Hezekiah.
- The conditions describing Judah and Jerusalem in this book suggest that Josiah's reforms had not yet started.
- We know little about this prophet, except that he was from Jerusalem.
- We also know from his writing that he was consumed with the righteous indignation of the Lord against the rampant sin! He focussed on the coming day of the Lord!

Destruction Of Judah (Zeph. 1:1-2:3)

- Their destruction will be complete (1:2-3).
- The destruction will start with Judah (1:4-13). [Destruction because of Baal worship mixed in with the worship of God (v4), astrological worship (v5), following foreign customs (v.8-9)].
- The destruction is called the "great day of the Lord" (1:14-18).
- The destruction may be limited on the humble (2:1-3). [Nation has crossed the point of no return. But there is hope for the individuals who are humble].

Destruction Of Surrounding Nations (Zeph. 2:4-3:8)

(1) Philistia (v.4-7), (2) Moab and Ammon (v.8-11), (3) Cush - a reference to Ethiopia, which also means Egypt (v.12), (4) Assyria (V.13-15). God expected the destruction of other nations to cause his nation to learn and repent. Yet, Judah failed to repent (3:6-7). Therefore God was going to judge the world by his jealous anger and by pouring out his wrath (3:8).

Destruction Will Give Birth To A Remnant (Zeph. 3:9-20)

God dreams of a remnant who will serve him and call on his name. Characteristics of the remnant are:

- purified lips that call on the name of the Lord (v9).
- Bring offerings (v10).
- Meek, humble and those who trust in God (v12).
- No lies (v13).

God rejoiced over his remnant. He delights in them. Sings for them. We again see the heart of God here. How he longs to have an intimate relationship with his people. Are we the remnant of God's people? Are we the ones who take refuge in Him? Or are we the ones consumed by His wrath? Let us humble ourselves and draw closer to God!

Application : Sing your favorite song to God and rejoice with Him

"I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. This will please the LORD - Ps. 69:30-31"

Day 22 : Book of Haggai [Haggai 1-2]

Introduction

Haggai (meaning festive one), worked with Zechariah in calling the people to resume the rebuilding of the temple. The foundation of the temple had been laid 16 years before with great excitement (Ezra 3:12), but after experiencing some persecution from neighboring people (Ezra 4:1-5), the Jews gave up hope. This prophecy(520BC) consists of four brief messages delivered within four months!

Rebuilding The Temple (Hag.1:1-15)

Haggai communicated clearly that his message was from God. In his brief book of 38 verses, he says 26 times something like “God declares”! He accomplished the task given to him, the temple was rebuilt in four years (Ezra 6:15). The people were eager enough to build their own houses, but allowed the house of God to be in ruins (v4). God reminded them that their hard times were because of their misplaced priorities (v.5-11). It took over three weeks for them to put this message into action (v15). What are our biggest priorities?

Future Glory Greater Than Former Glory (Hag.2:1-9)

The second message was to call people to the truth that God was indeed with them. The older people who remembered the first temple were very disappointed with the new one (v3). But God reminded them that He was with them as before (v5). God reminds them that rebuilding the temple was in the plan to bring the Messiah (v9), which means that its spiritual glory would be even greater!

Difficulties As Divine Discipline (Hag.2:10-19)

God was calling the people to have their hearts holy and not complacent God uses an illustration. Consecrated meat could not pass on consecration to whatever it touch, but defiled people could pass on their defilement to whatever they touched. In other words, contact with a healthy person cannot make an unhealthy person well. But contact with a sick person can make another person sick. So God’s point was holy activities cannot make them holy! But if their hearts were holy they can do holy activities. Doing good works doesn’t save us. On the other hand, we do good because we are saved.

Ultimate Blessing Is The Coming Of The Messiah (Hag.2:20-23)

Zerubbabel is pictured as a type of Christ. He is also in the lineage of Jesus (Mt.1:12-13). This prophecy closes, having accomplished its purpose of motivating the people to rebuild the physical temple, in order to pave the way for the building of the ultimate temple - the Church of Jesus Christ!

Application : What/where are you investing your time and money into?

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. - Mt. 13:44"

Day 23 : Book of Zechariah [Zechariah 1-2]

Introduction

- Zechariah whose name means “he whom the Lord remembers”, worked with Haggai in the restoration period.
- The reconstruction of the temple started soon after the arrival of the captives under Zerubbabel in 538 BC.
- However 16 years later, the temple had still not been completed. Therefore Haggai started prophesying (preaching) to resume the work and Zechariah joined him.
- As a result of their work, the temple was completed in 516 BC (Ezra 6:15).

Vision One : The Man Among The Myrtle Trees (Zech. 1:1-17)

- This vision’s basic message is that God’s angels had surveyed the world and could offer assurance that God was going to indeed succeed in having the temple rebuilt.
- God was in control of all nations. The colour of horses here may show something like war(red), famine(brown) and victory(white).

Do we really believe that God has power over all nations? Do we believe that God’s plan will ultimately succeed?

Vision Two : Four Horns And Four Craftsmen (Zech. 1:18-21)

- Horns stands for powers (other nations) who had scattered God’s nation
- Four is the world (cosmic) number.
- The craftsmen (blacksmiths) were God’s instruments of destruction against the hostile powers which had hurt the Israelites.
- The basic message from the vision is that the people can complete the temple without opposition from their enemies. No power can stop God from accomplishing His plan!

Vision Three : A Man With A Measuring Line (Zech. 2:1-13)

- The people of Jerusalem were concerned about their immediate future and their physical conditions.
- The message is God will totally take care of there needs and protect them.
- God also shows the Messianic age (v.10-13). God is going to bless the world through Christ.
- We also see God’s strong appeal to return from captivity to their homeland (v.6-7).

As we seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness our needs are taken care.

Application : Pray for unity in our ministries/churches. Pray for every disciple in your family group.

*“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints
- Eph. 6:18”*

Day 24 : Book of Zechariah [Zechariah 3-4]

Vision Four : Clean Garments For The High Priest (Zech. 3:1-10)

- Joshua represents the priesthood
- Satan was accusing the priesthood of being unworthy because of their sinful past (filthy clothes).
- God forgives their sins and restores them to his service (shown by clean garments).
- The priests were symbolic of the ultimate High Priest to come who is called the Branch.
- The stone could mean the Church (see also Dan.2:34-45). The seven eyes watching symbolizes the perfect care of God for the Church.
- The removal of sins in a single day refers to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

Today we too are His royal priesthood (1Pet.2:9) not by birth but the removal of our sins by the blood of Christ (Rev.1:6).

Vision Five : The Gold Lamp Stand And The Two Olive Trees (Zech.4:1-14)

- The lamp stand here resembles the one in the Holy place described by the Law of Moses.
- The previous vision, the priesthood had been cleansed. Now the civil side of nation (Zerubbabel) is also seen to be under God's care.
- The reason for the success is that God will remove the mountains (obstacles) for them and the victory will be based on God's power and not man's!
- The two olive trees supplied a continual supply of oil to the lamp stand, which could mean Joshua and Zerubbabel in their work in rebuilding the temple.

The true supply of oil for us is from Him who is both Priest and Prophet, namely Jesus Christ. It is He who gives us the Holy Spirit in abundance, as streams of living water that flows within us!

Application : Write about Satan's accusation and God's promise in different areas of your life.

Area	Satan's Accusation	God's Promise
1		
2		
3		

"Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death - Rom. 7:25-8:2"

Day 25 : Book of Zechariah [Zechariah 5-6]

Vision Six : The Flying Scroll (Zech.5:1-4)

- The scroll contains judgement against two specific sins of the people, which were stealing from one another and swearing falsely.
- The people were very materialistic.

Learning to live a content life is one of the secrets of being happy. God has put us all in different situations, we need to be content and bring glory to God.

Vision Seven : The Woman In A Basket (Zech. 5:5-11)

- The woman in the basket represented all the sins of the people. The people's unfaithfulness is pictured as a woman.
- God was going to remove their sins far away from Jerusalem.
- The message was that God would place some sort of limitation on the sinfulness of the people.

Sin carries its own seeds of destruction. The end of all sin is death. But then with repentance there is hope.

Vision Eight : Four Chariots (Zech. 6:1-8)

- The chariots represents the protection of God over his people through his control of the nations.
- God has provided peace for his people in the end.

God has provided us peace, peace that passes all understanding. Our peace comes from surrendering to God. The life lead by the Holy Spirit is one full of peace.

A Crown For Joshua (Zech. 6:9-15)

- The crown is made of both silver and gold. Symbolizing the dual offices of high priest and king held by the Branch to come.
- Jesus would be both High Priest and King over His Kingdom when the Church was established.

Christ is the King of righteousness, the King of Salem, the King of peace and the great High Priest. His dual office continues to this day, giving us peace, peace between sinners and the Holy God!

Application : What are somethings in your life that you are not content with in terms of materialistic needs.

“ But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction - I Tim. 6:6-9”

Day 26 : Book of Zechariah [Zechariah 7-8]

Justice And Mercy, Not fasting (Zech. 7:1-14)

- A group of leaders from Bethel came to inquire about the need for continuing the fast days. The Law of Moses required only one fast - in connection with the Day of Atonement.
- God asks them some probing questions about the reason of their fast (v.4-7).
- God said they observed fasting for themselves rather than for God (v.5).
- God instead calls them to treat others righteously (v.8-14).
- Fasting and praying continually can never replace love and justice in our lives.
- God is more concerned about their hearts and attitude than their rituals or religion.
- Our hearts become hard as flint(v.12) by just focussing on externals and neglecting loving God and others.

Which one do we tend to focus more on, the externals or the heart? Which do you think is easier for you to do, to fast or to treat others righteously?

Blessings Promised (Zech. 8:1-23)

- Ten encouraging statements are given regarding the future. Each one beginning with the declaration. "This is what the Lord Almighty says".
- It talks about both the immediate blessings and Messianic age blessing.
- We see that even these promised blessings are conditional (v.16-17). God expected them to be righteous.
- We see God was more excited about the joyful and glad occasions than the fasting (v.18-19). God wants to see us enjoying and rejoicing.
- In v.23, we see the power of a righteous life.

We are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. We are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let our light shine before men, that they may see our good deeds and praise our Father in heaven.

Application : In which areas of your life can people see Christ?

“ Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life--in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing - Phil.2:14-16”

Day 27 : Book of Zechariah [Zechariah 9-10]

Judgment On Israel's Enemies (Zech. 9:1-8)

- God will protect his people from the surrounding nations.
- We again see here how God is in total control of all the nations.

Nothing happens without God's knowledge and His permission. As Christians we are promised protection. God keeps us safe and the evil one cannot harm us (I Jn.5:18).

The Coming Of The Zion's King (Zech. 9:9-13)

- This passage clearly prophesies the Messiah. (Mt.21:1-11 & Jn. 12:13-19). It describes the triumphal entry of the Messiah.
- The Messiah would bring in peace and will free prisoners from the waterless pit.
- The Messiah comes 'riding on a donkey'. He did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many! Praise God for our Saviour, our King who is gentle and comes to us riding on a donkey!

Imagine you heard this prophecy at that time. How would you have responded to it?

The Lord Appears And Cares (Zech. 9:14-10:12)

- The first section talks about the restoration of Judah (9:13-17). Probably about the victories of the Jews over their enemies.

Chapter 10 talks about some Messianic prophecies.

- Idolatry and false leaders led them into captivity. But the tribe of Judah would provide the cornerstone to deliver them. The cornerstone is Christ. (Isa. 23:16, I Pet. 2:6, Eph. 2:20).
- Judah was first selected as the tribe out of which Christ would come.
- God promises the restoration to their lands (v.6-12)

This passage also shows how the Lord will shepherd His flock.

Applications : Praise God through Psalm 23.

"A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers - Gal. 6:7-10"

Day 28 : Book of Zechariah [Zechariah 11-12]

Two Shepherds (Zech. 11:1-17)

- This section shows the rejection of the promised blessing.
- This rejection resulted in the final defeat of Israel, which ended the Jewish religion as defined by the Law. The ultimate overthrow came in 70AD at the hands of the Romans.
- God had pastured them as His flock and had dealt with their bad shepherds, but when they rejected Him once again, He finally ended His covenant with them. This is signified by the breaking of His staffs(v.7-11).
- The prophet asked the people to pay whatever they thought his work among them had been worth.
- Their response was to pay the pitiful sum of 30 pieces of silver. God feels disgusted by their response. This passage is quoted in Mt.27:9, regarding Jesus.

Here Jesus is our good shepherd. He knows His sheep and calls them by name and leads them out. Are we His good sheep? Are we the the sheep that listens, follows and knows the good shepherd?

Jerusalem's Enemies To Be Destroyed (Zech. 12:1-9)

- This section, following the prediction of the destruction of physical Jerusalem. Basically showing how the Church of Jesus Christ is indestructible.
- Note the power that the people of God have in His kingdom! The feeblest being strong like David.
- The people will be strong because the Lord Almighty is their God (v.5)
- Praise God for His Spirit that dwells in us and causes us to be strong and victorious.

Mourning For The One They Pierced (Zech. 12:10-14)

- Jesus is the one they pierced.
- Through his piercing we are cleansed from sins (Jn.19:37, I Pet.2:21-24).

Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to His own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Application : Think about how you can be a better sheep.

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all ; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand - Jn. 10:27-29”

Day 29 : Book of Zechariah [Zechariah 13-14]

Cleansing From Sins (Zech. 13:1-9)

- The fullness of grace for our forgiveness is shown as the fountain opened on that day (v.1).
- Idolatry will be removed once and for all from God's people(v.2).
- Once the new covenant of Christ had been completely revealed and recorded, the office of the prophets ceased (v.2-6).
- The smiting of the shepherd (v.7-9) is again a Messianic reference (Mt.26:31).
- Even though the man smitten was close to God (v.7), God himself ordered the striking (Acts 2:23).
- Only a remnant of the people accepted the offering for themselves (v.8) and they were to be brought into the refining fire by God (v.9).

The grace of God has been opened for us too. The fountain is the blood of Jesus that purifies us from all impurities. As the song goes, "Foul, I to the fountain fly; wash me, Saviour, or I die. Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee".

The Lord Comes And Reigns (Zech. 14:1-21)

- The first part shows the destruction of the physical Jerusalem.
- God promises to destroy the destroyers (v.3-7). Beginning is v.8, the remainder of the chapter shows the spiritual blessings in the Kingdom of the Messiah.
- Living water flows out from Jerusalem, a reference to the Holy Spirit (v.8, Jn.7:37-39).
- The King will be the one Lord (v.9, Eph.4:5).
- The Gentiles from the nations who had fought against the Lord's people would have an opportunity to join those people (v.16-19).
- Finally, the prophet sees a day in which every possession and aspect of life will be under the Lordship of Jesus Christ (v.20-21).
- The old has gone, the new has come!

We too eagerly wait for the new. As it is written, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"

Application : Think about heaven and thank God for showing us the way.

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"-- but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God - I Cor. 2:9-11"

Day 30 : Book of Malachi [Malachi 1 - 2:9]

Introduction

The name Malachi means “my messenger”. The historical settings of this book seems to coincide with the time of Nehemiah. So we assume the date to be between 445-432 BC. Nehemiah had taken a group of Israelites back to Canaan many years after the temple was rebuilt. He did this for rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Malachi’s writing shows that the people had become very frustrated that their ‘golden age’ had not dawned yet. This frustration affected their zeal for God. Malachi urgently called the people back to a total commitment for God. He makes it very clear that complacency is out and radical commitment is in! Malachi’s prophecies are in a disputation style. Or in other words, God say his point, the people answer by asking questions and God answers those questions again.

First Dispute (Mal. 1:2-5)

- God says : I have loved you!
- People asks : How have you loved us?
- God answers : By choosing Jacob (Israel) over Esau (Edom)!

God reminds his people that he loved Jacob but hated Esau. This is not to be taken absolutely but relatively, i.e., God preferred or chose Jacob. Both Jacob and Esau are to be understood as nations and not individuals. That is God’s love has to do with primarily election and covenant. Because of his covenant with them they were special objects of his love.

Second Dispute (Mal. 1:6-2:9)

- God says : Why do you priests despise my name?
- Priests asks : How have we despised your name?
- God answers : By offering blemished sacrifice.
- Priest ask : How have we done that?
- God answers : By offering blemished, lame or sick animals.

They would not have offered such to their governor, but they thought nothing of giving God their leftovers! God even mentions that He would rather have no worship than sinful worship. How do we sacrifice today? Our bodies (Rom.12:1), our money (Phil.4:18), our praise to God (Heb.13:15), our services to others (Heb.13:16), our prayers (Rev.5:8) and our fruit (Rom.15:16). What is our attitude in sacrificing?

Application : What are you sacrificing for God today?_

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship - Rom. 12:1”

Day 31 : Book of Malachi [Malachi 2:10 -4]

Third Dispute (Mal.2:10-16)

- God says : He will not accept their offerings!
- People asks : Why?
- God answers : Because they have broken their marriage covenant with the wife of their youth!

Breaking faith is always bad, but the Israelites had broken their covenants of marriage in a detestable manner. They had married foreign women who were idolatrous and had divorced their wives. God states, "I hate divorce!"

Fourth Dispute (Mal. 2:17-3:5)

- God says : You have wearied me!
- People asks : How?
- God answers : By thinking that evildoers will prosper!

God reminds his people about the day of his coming! God will come on his day to right all wrongs, punishing the wicked and rewarding the righteous. There will be a distinction between "righteous" and the "wicked", between the one who serve and who does not serve!

Fifth Dispute (Mal.3:6-12)

- God says : Return to Me!
- Peoples asks : How?
- God says : You are robbing Me!
- People asks : How?
- God answers : By withholding tithes and offerings.

What God was going after was about their attitude! Their religion was resignation and not rejoicing, burden and not blessing, sacrifice and not salvation, ignorance and not illumination!

Sixth Dispute (Mal. 3:13-4:6)

- God says : You have spoken against Me!
- People asks : How?
- God answer : By saying it is vain to serve God!

He will punish the wicked and reward the faithful. God call them to keep the Law of Moses (Mal.4:4) and that Elijah will come before the day of the Lord (4:5-6).

Application : Do you find your Christianity a burden? If yes, why?

"This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith - I Jn. 5:3-4"

FULFILLMENT OF MESSIANIC PROPHECIES [MINOR PROPHETS]

Book	Verse	Prophecy	NT Fulfillment
Hosea	11:1	God would call His Son (Messiah) out of Egypt.	Mt.2:13-15
	13:14	The Messiah would defeat sin and death.	I Cor.15:55-57
Joel	2:32	The Messiah would provide salvation for all mankind.	Rom.10:12-13
Amos	8:9	God would blacken the sky during Jesus' crucifixion.	Mt.27:45-46
Micah	5:1	The Messiah would be buffeted on the face at His trial.	Mt.27:30
	5:2a	The Messiah would be born in the town of Bethlehem.	Mt.2:1-2
	5:2b	The Messiah would come from the lineage of Judah.	Lk.3:23-33
	5:2c	The Messiah would be eternal.	Rev.1:8
Haggai	2:6-9	The Messiah would visit the second temple.	Lk.2:27-32
	2:23	The Messiah would come from the lineage of Zerubbabel.	Lk.3:23-27
Zechariah	2:10-11a	The Messiah would be God and dwell among His people.	Jn.1:14
	2:10-11b	The Messiah would be sent by God.	Jn.8:18-19
	3:8a	The Messiah would come from the lineage of Zerubbabel.	Lk.3:23-27
	3:8b	The Messiah would be God's chosen messenger.	Jn.17:4
	6:12,13	The Messiah would be both a High Priest and a King.	Heb.8:1 Rom.8:34
	9:9a	The Messiah would enter Jerusalem and be greeted with rejoicing.	Mt.21:8-10
	9:9b	The Messiah would be viewed as King.	Jn.12:12-13
	9:9c	The Messiah would be just and worthy.	Jn.5:30

Book	Verse	Prophecy	NT Fulfillment
Zechariah	9:9d	The Messiah would bring salvation to all mankind.	Lk. 19:10 Tit.2:11
	9:9e	The Messiah would be humble in spirit.	Mt. 11:29 Jn. 13:4-14
	9:9f	The Messiah would enter Jerusalem riding on an ass.	Mt. 21:6-9
	10:4	The Messiah would be the cornerstone.	Eph. 2:20
	11:10	Israel's rejection of the Messiah would result in God removing His protection of the people (Jews).	Lk. 19:41-44
	11:12	The Messiah would be betrayed by Judas for thirty pieces of silver.	Mt. 26:14-15
	11:13a	The thirty pieces of silver would be thrown into the temple.	Mt. 27:3-5
	11:13b	The thirty pieces of silver would be used to buy the Potter's Field.	Mt. 27:6-7
	12:10	The Messiah's body would be pierced (blood/water emitted).	Jn. 19:34
	13:7a	The Messiah would be God's co-equal.	Jn. 14:9
	13:7b	The disciples would be "scattered" after the death of the Messiah.	Mt. 26:31-56
Malachi	3:1a	A messenger (John The Baptist) would prepare the way for the Messiah.	Mt. 11:10
	3:1b	The Messiah would make an unannounced appearance at the Jewish temple.	Mt. 11:15-16
	3:1c	The Messiah would communicate the "New Covenant".	Lk. 4:43
	4:5	The Messiah's coming would be announced by a man coming in the spirit of Elijah (John The Baptist).	Mt 3:1-2 Mt. 11:13-14
	4:6	The Messiah's announcer would turn many hearts to God.	Lk. 1:16-17 Mk. 1:3-5

SUMMARY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

Date	P r o p	Meaning (name)	Theme	Gave Prophecies To/About	Major Sins Addressed
840 to 830	O b a d i a h	Worshipper of YHVH	Day of the Lord; Destruction of Edom; Israel's restoration	Against Edom	Edom had continual violence toward Jacob. Edom cheered when Judah taken captive.
830 to 750	J o e l	YHVH is God	The Day of the Lord	Israel, Northern Kingdom	Adultery, drunkenness, idolatry, licentiousness
780 to 740	J o n a h	Dove	Sign of Commitment; Type of Jesus Christ; God's mercy to repentant	Nineveh, with implications to all peoples	Cruelty of the Assyrians
765 to 725	H o s e a	Salvation	Salvation	Israel, Northern Kingdom	Adultery, drunkenness, idolatry, licentiousness.
760	A m o s	Burden Bearer	The Day of the Lord; The Eternal will roar	Israel, Judah and Benjamin. All Nations	Oppression of the poor; Sexual Immorality; Wanton Luxury; Corruption of law & men
740 to 700	M i c a h	Who is like YHVH?	The Eternal is just Judge	Samaria, Jerusalem and then the whole earth	Lack of justice in the land, injustice, oppression
640 to 620	N a h u m	Conso-lation	Judgement on Nineveh; Comfort to Israel	Assyrians, primarily the city of Nineveh	Cruelty of the Assyrians, overstepped boundaries

Date	P r o p	Meaning (name)	Theme	Gave Prophecies To/About	Major Sins Addressed
640 to 609	Z e p h a n i a h	Hidden by YHVH	God's indignation on the earth; Who may be hidden?; Israel repents, God saves them	Judah, Jerusalem, all Israel and all peoples, warning them of the Day of the Lord	Spiritual fornication
608 to 605	H a b a k k u k	Embrace	God Embraces Judah through destroying the Chaldeans	Babylon with implications for all peoples	Aggression/plund er; Greed/self- assertion; Graft/violence in building; Inhumanity; Idolatry
520	H a g g a i	Festival	The restoration Temple points to the Church	Zerubbabel, Joshua and the returned remnant	Neglect in building God's House. Procastration.
520 to 480	Z e c h a r i a h	Remem- bered by YHVH	The coming of God's Kingdom preceded by building of Temple	Zerubbabel, Joshua and the returned remnant	Joshua had filthy garments. Lack of Judgment, mercy & peace. Living in evil ways.
420 to 400	M a l a c h i	My Messenger	Be prepared for the messenger that is to come. (Elijah)	Israel (12 tribes) and Israel of God today (Church)	Priests neglecting duties. People chided for divorce, adultery, robbing God and criticizing.