

#24. MINOR PROPHETS - GROUP ONE HOSEA, JOEL, AND AMOS

1. Key Themes of Hosea, Joel, and Amos

- “God’s judgment is just and certain for all the earth.”
 - **Hosea, Joel, and Amos** - are encouraging messages reassuring Israel of God’s steadfast love, His unequaled power, and His ultimate authority on earth. These messages span 835-710BC. As with Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, the focus is on the years preceding the Assyrian captivity of Israel.
- Hosea’s story is the poignant tale of a husband’s mission to reclaim the heart and hand of his unfaithful bride. His relentless pursuit is a prophetic description of God’s persistent, overcoming love for Israel. As symbolized by Hosea, God had taken Israel as His bride, but she is described as a *daughter of harlotry*. In spite of her habitual tendency toward whoredom, Hosea (and God) are seen expressing undying devotion to their loved one. Though they would be set aside for a while, restoration would be complete.
- Joel used a recent natural disaster to illustrate the approaching day of Judgment upon Judah. Though judgment would not come to Judah for over a century, the Lord assured them calamity would certainly come unless they repented. As in the case of Gomer and Israel, judgment upon Judah would be devastating. Yet Messiah would make it possible for the people of God to repent and return, and the resulting restoration would be greater than the pending destruction.
- Amos described the coming judgment upon Tyre (referred to by Jesus in Matthew 11:21, 22) and upon Israel. Though Amos’ words are among the harshest of the prophets, there are also tender mercies described as God works to bring Israel back to Himself.

2. The Book of Hosea

- **The Author:** Hosea, son of Beeri
 - This book was written in about 715BC, just a few years after the fall of Samaria (722BC). Hosea’s ministry spanned the period between 755 and 710BC. Jeroboam II was the king in Samaria during this time; while Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings in Judah. Hosea was a contemporary of Isaiah and Micah. The story of this period is found in 2 Kings 14-20 and 2 Chronicles 26-32.

- Hosea's name means *salvation* or "deliverance". It is essentially the same name as "Joshua". He and Jonah are the only writing prophets from the Northern Kingdom.
- Hosea's messages came out of an economically prosperous reign of Jeroboam II. The problem of Israel during this time was two-fold: (1) The rich were oppressing the poor, and (2) the Northern Kingdom had been unfaithful in regard to their covenant with Jehovah.
- Many Christians experience a moral quandary when attempting to understand why God would order a prophet to marry a prostitute. There are four possibilities:
 - Gomer may have been chaste at the time of their wedding. Thus, her fall into harlotry would be seen as not occurring until she was already the wife of Hosea.
 - The passage may be speaking in a proleptic sense. This would mean that God was speaking prophetically. In other words, He knew what she would become.
 - Others have said she was from a people of harlotry, perhaps referring to her family business or to the sad spiritual condition of Israel.
 - It may be that God simply commanded an obedient prophet to sacrificially marry an unfaithful woman in order to illustrate God's great love for Israel.
- **Key Verses**
 - When The Lord first began speaking to Israel through Hosea, He said to him, "Go and marry a daughter of harlotry so that some of her children will be conceived in unfaithfulness. This will illustrate how Israel has acted like a prostitute by turning against The Lord and worshipping other gods." (1:2)
 - Then The Lord said to me, "Go and love your wife again, even though she commits adultery with another lover. This will illustrate that The Lord still loves Israel, even though the people have turned to other gods and love to worship them." (3:1)
- **Key People**
 - Hosea - the son of Beeri, native of the Northern Kingdom
 - Gomer - the wife of Hosea
 - Jezreel - the first son of Hosea and Gomer. He was named prophetically to declare impending judgment. His name means *God will scatter*. God was declaring that Israel would pay for the bloodshed of Jehu over the House of Ahab that occurred at Jezreel. It was a picture of Israel's banishment to Assyria.

- Lo-ruhamah - the daughter of Hosea and Gomer. Her name meant *not pitted*, indicating the removal of God's protecting hand upon Israel.
- Lo-ammi - the second son of Hosea and Gomer. His name meant *not my people*, and signified God's rejection of Israel.
- **Key Places**
 - The events of Hosea's story take place in Samaria, the capital city of Israel.
- **The Themes of Hosea**
 - Love does not overlook sin.
 - God's love is persistent and restorative.
- **The Contents of Hosea**
 - The Harlotry of Gomer (1:1-3:5)
 - The relationship of the prophet and his wife (1:1-9)
 - The relationship of God and Israel (1:10-2:23)
 - Reconciliation will occur (3:1-5).
 - The Harlotry of Israel (4:1-14:9)
 - Israel is found as guilty as Gomer (4:1-6:3).
 - Israel will be put away (6:4-10:15).
 - Israel will be restored to Jehovah (11:1-14:9).
- **Worth Remembering**
 - Hosea is the longest and least structured of the 12 Minor Prophets.

- The emphasis is on the covenantal relationship of Jehovah to Israel. Thus it is filled with descriptive terms such as marriage, divorce, and unfaithfulness.

- **When reading Hosea**

- Remember the judgment of God is following a period of great economic prosperity for Israel. There was no logical reason to believe that great judgment was coming.
- Hosea is perhaps the most passionate and gut-wrenching of the prophetic voices because Israel's adultery has been mirrored in Hosea's own life.
- Although the message was given to Israel, the message of warning was declared in Judah as well.

3. The Book of Joel

- **The Author:** Joel, son of Pethuel

- The date of writing is difficult to determine, but internal clues indicate his book was written between 835 and 796BC during the reign of Joash.
- Joel's name means *The Lord is God*.
- The audience was the Southern Kingdom of Judah.
- There are over a dozen men in the Old Testament who are named Joel. Rabbinic tradition says he was from the tribe of Reuben, a citizen of Bethharam. There is no certainty about this; however, and he seems very familiar with the area around Jerusalem.
- Jerusalem seemed to be experiencing frequent hostile incursions from Philistia, Tyre and Sidon (3:1-8). There had also been a catastrophic invasion of locusts (1:7-20) that was illustrative of the coming judgment upon Judah.
- The theme of Joel is *The Day of The Lord*. It is extensively discussed in 1:15-3:14, and is one of the longest passages in the Old Testament on the subject. The prophets generally saw the Day of The Lord as an end-of-days event, a time of judgment uniquely belonging to Yahweh, in which all things would be set right. There are also *near day* events that foreshadowed the Great Day of The Lord's Wrath, such as the judgment upon Babylon and Edom after the invasion of Judah.

- It is the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Joel 2 that is used to signify the birth of the church in the New Testament (Acts 2).
- **Key Verses**
 - “Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; ¹³And rend your heart and not your garments. Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil.(2:12-13)
 - “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. ²⁹“Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. ³⁰“I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire and columns of smoke. ³¹“The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. ³²“And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered.” (2:28-32)
- **Key People**
 - Joel - the son of Pethuel, probably a native of Judah
 - The people of Judah.
- **Key Places**
 - Joel’s oracle is centered around Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah.
- **The Themes of Joel**
 - The result of sin is judgment.
 - The Promise of The Father is the Holy Spirit.
- **The contents of Joel:**
 - The Day of The Locusts (1:1-2:27)
 - The Author (1:1)
 - The Destruction (1:2-12)

- The Call of Repentance (1:13-20)
- The Day of the Lord (2:28-3:21)
 - The Sounding of the Alarm (2:1)
 - The Invasion of the Army (2:2-11)
 - The Second Call to Repentance (2:12-17)
 - The Eschatological Day of The Lord (2:18-3:21)
 - ✓ Judgment will consume evil (2:18-20).
 - ✓ There will be restoration of physical fortunes (2:21-27).
 - ✓ There will be restoration of spiritual graces (2:28-32).
 - ✓ There will be restoration of Israel (3:1-21).
- **Worth Remembering**
 - There are many specific references to The Day of The Lord in the Old Testament (Obadiah 15; Joel 1:15; Joel 2:1; Joel 2:11; Joel 2:31; Joel 3:14; Amos 5:18; Amos 5:20; Isaiah 2:12; Isaiah 13:6; Isaiah 13:9; Zephaniah 1:7; Zephaniah 1:14; Ezekiel 13:5; Ezekiel 30:3; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5).
 - The New Testament passages dealing with The Day of The Lord are found in Acts 2:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; and 2 Peter 3:10.
- **When reading Joel**
 - Remember that while not all natural disasters are supernatural judgments, some of them may be.
 - Joel was probably citing Deuteronomy 28:22, 38-42 when describing the invasion of locusts as a result of apostasy.
 - Although the message was given to Israel, the message of warning was declared in Judah as well.

4. The Book of Amos

- **The Author:** Amos, a shepherd/farmer from Tekoa in Judah, which was about ten miles south of Jerusalem.
 - This book was written in about 755BC, so he was a contemporary of Jonah. Uzziah was king in Judah and Jeroboam II ruled in Israel. It was about two years before a catastrophic earthquake occurred (1:1; Zechariah 14:5).
 - Interestingly, Amos was a citizen of Judah who was called upon to prophesy to Israel. Due to Nineveh's repentance, tension with Assyria had been minimized, and it was a time of great prosperity in Israel and Judah. Spiritually however, apostasy was becoming more evident in both kingdoms.
 - Amos' name means *burden* or *burden-bearer*.

- **Key Verses**
 - Seek good and not evil, that you may live; And thus may the Lord God of hosts be with you, Just as you have said! ¹⁵Hate evil, love good, And establish justice in the gate! Perhaps the Lord God of hosts May be gracious to the remnant of Joseph. Amos 5:14, 5 NASB

 - Woe to those who are at ease in Zion and to those who *feel* secure in the mountain of Samaria, The distinguished men of the foremost of nations, To whom the house of Israel comes. Amos 6:1 NASB

 - Then Amaziah said to Amos, Go, you seer, flee away to the land of Judah and there eat bread and there do your prophesying! ¹³But no longer prophesy at Bethel, for it is a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence." ¹⁴Then Amos replied to Amaziah, I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs. ¹⁵But the Lord took me from following the flock and the Lord said to me, go prophesy to My people Israel. ¹⁶Now hear the word of the Lord: you are saying, you shall not prophesy against Israel nor shall you speak against the house of Isaac. ¹⁷Therefore, thus says the Lord, Your wife will become a harlot in the city, your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be parceled up by a *measuring* line and you yourself will die upon unclean soil. Moreover, Israel will certainly go from its land into exile. Amos 7:12-17 NASB

- **Key People**
 - Amos - the farmer from Tekoa

 - Amaziah - the wicked priest of Bethel who persecuted Amos

- Jeroboam II - king in Israel

- **Key Places**
 - Bethel and Samaria

- **The Themes of Amos**
 - The need to take God seriously

 - We will all answer to God for the way we have lived.

 - It is a sin to oppress the helpless.

 - God is looking for people with sincere hearts.

- **The Contents of Amos**
 - God will judge the nations (1:1-2:16).
 - Introduction of Amos (1:1, 2)

 - Judgment against Israel's enemies (1:3-2:3)
 - ✓ Damascus (1:3-5)
 - ✓ Gaza (1:6-8)
 - ✓ Tyre (1:9,10)
 - ✓ Edom (1:11,12)
 - ✓ Ammon (1:13-15)
 - ✓ Moab (2:1-3)
 - ✓ Judah (2:4,5)
 - ✓ Israel (2:6-16)

 - Judgment against Judah (2:4,5)

 - Judgment against Israel (2:6-16)

 - Israel's Specific Sins (3:1-6:14)
 - Irresponsible Living (3:1-15)

 - Idolatry (4:1-13)

- Lack of Ethical Behavior (5:1-6:14)
- Visions of Judgment and Eventual Restoration (7:1-9:15)
 - The Lord will have mercy (7:1-6)
 - ✓ The Vision of Locusts (7:1-3)
 - ✓ The Vision of Fire (7:4-6)
 - The Lord will no longer have mercy (7:7-9:10)
 - ✓ The Vision of the Plumb Line (7:7-9)
 - ✓ Conflict between Amos and Amaziah (7:10-17)
 - ✓ Vision of the Fruit Basket (8:1-14)
 - ✓ The Vision of the Altar (9:1-10)
 - The Lord will restore Israel (9:11-15)
- **Worth remembering:**
 - Remember God's goal is the restoration of Israel (See Romans 9-11; Isaiah 27,42,44,65,66; Jeremiah 30-33; Ezekiel 36, 37,40-48; Daniel 9,12; Hosea 2,14; Joel 3; Amos 9; Obadiah 17,21; Micah 7; Zephaniah 3; Haggai 2; Zechariah 13; Malachi 4).
 - Remember that Amos prophesied in a period of peace and economic stability for Israel.
- **When reading Amos:**
 - Remember he is a contemporary of Hosea.
 - God used his background as a farmer and shepherd to illustrate God's heart for Israel.