



Minor Prophets 1
Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah

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INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

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OBADIAH

NAME: Obadiah

MEANING: Servant of the Lord

DATE: 845 B.C.

AUDIENCE: Judah

THEME: Destruction of Edom AND Restoration of Israel

SPECIAL NOTE: Shortest book of the Old Testament

OUTLINE:

- I. Destruction of Edom Foretold..... 1-9
- II. Reaping What They have Sown 10-16
- III. The Deliverance of God's People..... 17-21

LESSONS:

Neutrality can be guilt (v. 11; Mt 6:24; 12:30).

Human defenses are totally helpless when the power of God comes against them.

Eternal justice will prevail.

Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall (Prov 16:18).

A lack of brotherly love is not pleasing to the Lord.

It is wrong to be happy over the calamity of another and to gloat over his misfortune (Prov 17:5b cf Job 31:20-29).

The ultimate victory is always God's.

One always reaps what he sows (Gal 6:7-9; 1 Cor 3:6; Lk 8:11).

When one shares or sides with wrongdoing, he becomes "one of them."

OBADIAH INTRODUCTION

I. NAME.

“Obadiah” means “Servant of Jehovah.” It is a fairly common name. There are a number of “Obadiahs” in the scripture. These prophets’ names were very indicative of their ministry.

II. DATE OF THE BOOK: 845 or 586 B.C.

Obadiah is most likely operating somewhere in the 800 B.C. period of time. The date of the writing is either 845 B.C. or 6th century (Harrison). Obviously, it will be difficult to determine the writer of the book because of the date problem. There are thirteen possible Obadiahs in the Bible. The reason these two dates are fairly well established is because there were mainly two sieges against Jerusalem. One siege is in the days of Jehoram, 854 B.C. The final siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar was in 586 B.C. So it is either 855 or 586 B.C.

III. ARGUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE 845 B.C. DATE.

- A. Where Obadiah is placed in the canon. The Hebrew Bible has Obadiah fourth in order of the prophets Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah. By doing this they show that they consider the date fairly early, although this is not a conclusive argument.
- B. The book of Amos shows an acquaintance with Obadiah’s writings. Amos is dated 760 B.C. Here are some comparative passages:

Obadiah v. 4	-	Amos 9:2
Obadiah vv. 9-10,18	-	Amos 1:11-12
Obadiah v. 14	-	Amos 1:6,9
Obadiah v. 19	-	Amos 9:12
Obadiah v. 20	-	Amos 9:14

NOTE: There is no logical reason to reject the 845 B.C. date (although to say it is 586 B.C. does no harm to the understanding of this book).

This prophecy is against Edom.

IV. HISTORY OF EDOM.

Esau, the brother of Jacob, was the one who established Edom - Genesis 25:22-26. God chose Jacob over Esau, so enmity prevailed between Esau and Jacob. Not only throughout their lives, but the two nations that came from them have had enmity between them as far back as we can go. The two nations began having a legitimate conflict at the time of the Exodus. The conflict continued until the time of David - 2 Samuel 8:14. Numbers 20:14-21 tells us why the Edomites refused passage to the sons of Israel. Edom revolted during the reign of Jehoram - 2 Kings 8:20-22. Throughout the ages Edom stands as a symbol of earthly non-spiritual people of the world. The Edomites were pushed from the land by the Nabataeans in the 2nd century B.C. and forced to occupy Jewish territory south of Judah. They were conquered by John Hyrcanus of the Maccabees who forced them to be circumcised and to accept the Law, thus they became Jewish proselytes. By 100 A.D. the Edomites had become lost to history.

During the writing of Obadiah, the Edomites inhabited a space 110 miles long and 30 miles wide which was on the southern shore of the Dead Sea, and the land of the Midianites on the east. The two chief cities were Bozrah, which was impregnable, and Teman.

V. JACOB AND ESAU.

While still in the womb it was prophesied that the elder was to serve the younger, there will be two nations (Gen 25:22-26).

Esau's birthright, which carried with it both spiritual and physical blessings, were given up for "momentary gratification" (Gen 25:27-34).

The later meeting of the two brothers (Gen 32-33).

Moses' courteous appeal during the exodus was denied (Num 20:14-22).

Saul fought against Edom (1 Sam 14:47).

Subjection of Edom under David - 18,000 Edomites were killed (2 Sam 8:13-14).

Revolt under Jehoram (2 Kgs 8:20-22).

Amaziah, king of Judah, severely defeated to Edomites (2 Kgs 14:7).

Edom to be devastated (Jer 49:7-22).

VI. SOURCE: Joseph Free, *Archaeology in Bible History*, pp. 276ff.; ISBE: "Edom."

OBADIAH - EXPOSITION

- V. 1** Other than this particular vision which was written by Obadiah, we know nothing of the man himself. There are a number of Obadiahs in the scripture. Which Obadiah this is we do not know.

A common element that you will find among all of the prophets is that they establish authority with their prophecies. "Thus says the Lord God . . ."

"Edom" is south of the Dead Sea in an area called Arabah.

The fact that he says "We . . ." is interesting. Is he saying "we" the people of God or is he saying "we" the prophets ". . . have heard a report from the Lord . . ." We do not know the answer to that question, but it is probably one of those two.

". . . from the Lord . . ." Once again underscoring authority. This is ". . . a report from the Lord . . ."

"Arise and let us go against her (Edom) for battle." This underscores an Old Testament biblical truth that God uses foreign nations to accomplish His will. The Israelites are not going to be the ones to eliminate the Edomites.

- V. 2** The Edomites were despised because of their arrogance. They lived in mountain fortresses. These mountain fortresses were of such magnitude that opposing armies could not defeat them. It was very easy to defend. As a matter of fact, a single man, or a couple of men, could ward off a very large army all by themselves. The reason was because the army had to go single file up a very narrow mountain pass to get to these cliff fortresses.
- V. 3** When he mentions ". . . the clefts of the rock . . ." Obadiah is talking about these mountain fortresses of the region of the Arabah. Apparently the Arabah is a very majestic and beautiful region. Also it can be seen just how impregnable the mountain fortresses were.

A key idea in this book has to do with the Edomites pride. For example, look at vv. 3a,4,12-13. All of these things underscore the fact that these people have a very serious problem of pride. They were very, very self-sufficient (cf. Prov 16:18).

Our modern word for "clefts" is "coves." "Coves" of the rock. They were huge cave-like areas, but did not necessarily go back deep into the rock. It was as if they were naturally hewn out of the rock.

THREE-PART SERMONETTE BASED ON THE SAME
LETTER CONCERNING THE EDMITES

- I. They were deceived - verse 3.
- II. They were despised - verse 2.
- III. They were debased - verse 4.

V. 4 Scholars generally consider the second line to be terminology they used to describe themselves. We set our “. . . nest among the stars,” is part of the bragging attitude. “From there I will bring you down . . .” What is the saying? “The bigger they are, the harder they fall.” With the Edomites, “the higher they are, the farther they fall.”

Edom had pride specifically in three areas:

- I. In their physical strength.
- II. In their strategic location.
- III. In their tremendous wealth.

Edom possessed great wealth because it had ore deposits in abundance in the Arabah. The Edomites also had some cities that were located on the crossroads of caravan travel, so there would be many merchants passing through these Edomite cities.

V. 5 Obadiah is beginning to lay the foundation for what is going to happen. Thieves and robbers are going to come. He is making a point that is generally true about thieves and robbers. And that is, they normally would take enough until they could not carry anymore. A few grapes would be left in the vineyard. Maybe a few valuables would still be left in the home. But not these robbers. Not the robbers who are going to Edom. Look what is going to happen in verse 6.

V. 6 Even though robbers usually take until they have enough, not so with those who are going to plunder Edom. They are going to steal every single thing. They are not going to leave anything. Their plundering will be complete.

V. 7 “They who eat your bread” means “the one who became wealthy off of you.” “Those who became wealthy off of you will set an ambush for you.” This verse is bringing a very important point, not only in ancient times but in modern times as well. That is, there is nothing more disastrous for a nation than to have its allies turn against it. The allies of the Edomites were most probably Moab and Am-

mon. So when Obadiah talks about friends setting an ambush he is very likely talking about the Moabites and the Ammonites.

“There is no understanding in him.” That little phrase, (which is put in parenthesis in the NASV) is simply saying, “Edom will not see their defeat coming.” They will never suspect that their own allies are plotting their overthrow. Archaeologists and other historians say that the Ammonites and the Moabites became extremely wealthy because of their association with the Edomites. They would never have suspected these nations would turn against them. They do not see it coming, they will not know what to do when it comes.

- V. 8** This verse is the first time we have our key word “day” used. That “day” is the day when God is going to destroy the Edomites.

Edom has been known for its wise men. But their wisdom will be confused and will fail them when they need it the most, when these allies are attacking them. Normally what wise men say when their nations is being attacked is, “Let us cry to our allies for help.” But these wise men are not going to be able to say that because their own allies are the ones attacking them. Therefore, their wise men are going to be without understanding. They are not going to know what to do. Wisdom is not being removed by death. Also, Israel was instructed to treat Edomites as brothers (cf. Deut 2:4-5; 23:7).

- V. 9** “Teman” is the southern most of Edom’s two chief cities. Perhaps Teman was the capital of Edom and was a city which was known for its wise men. It is interesting to note, in the book of Job, Eliphaz came from Teman (Job 2:11). With all their wisdom, all their wealth and all their power gone Edom did not have a chance. The “mighty men” are dismayed and the “men of understanding” are destroyed. That meant certain doom for the nation.
- V. 10** Besides the pride, another reason why Edom is going to fall is because of the mistreatment of their brother Jacob. When they needed help and were weak, the Edomites should have been an ally, should have been a friend, but they were exactly the opposite (Ezek 25:12-14; Joel 3:19; Jer 49:7-13,20-23 cf. Gen 27:41ff; Amos 1:11).

“. . . Cut off forever” means “till the end of time.” It has been over 2000 years since the Edomites have vanished from the face to the earth and there is not any reason to suspect the Edomites are going to suddenly appear again. They were cut off and they have been cut off forever. From looking at all those passages in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, it is obvious that the Edomites brought shame to Judah. Now the situation changes and the Edomites are going to be “. . . covered with shame.”

- V. 11** Obadiah is talking about when Edom should have felt sympathy for their suffering brothers to the north. When they should have been rallying to the side of the Is-

raelites, they were, in fact, joining up with Israel's enemies. Also, neutrality can be equal to guilt (cf. Mt 12:30).

“. . . foreigners entered his gate and cast lots for Jerusalem . . .” This is one of the phrases indicating the book of Obadiah belongs in the 845 B.C. range, because several nations were involved in the attack of Jerusalem when it was attacked in the 800's (cf. 2 Chron 21:8-18).

V. 12 This verse shows the attitude Edom possessed. The Edomites really enjoyed seeing the Israelites harmed. They were rejoicing at another's misfortune. And the lesson is: Do not rejoice at another's misfortune because you do not know what tomorrow may bring (cf. Prov 17:5; 24:17; Job 31:28-29).

V. 13 “Do not enter the gate of My people” means “do not share in the plunder.” They would be destroyed, therefore, there would no reason to go into the city except to plunder.

“Yes you, do not gloat over their calamity in the day of their disaster,” reminds one of a travesty that exists today. How many times does a disaster strike a city or country side and the National Guard is called in to protect the stores? They are not protecting your goods from your enemies, but are protecting them from your own neighbors. These people were looting the friends' and neighbors' stores and businesses.

V. 14 Apparently the Edomites were lying in wait either to rob, slay or make slaves of those fleeing for their lives. Things were so bad they were having to run for their lives. One would think they could find friends to provide refuge. But when they ran into their brethren, the Edomites, all they found was somebody ready to rob them and perhaps make slaves of them. If the enemy thought they could not make profit from them as slaves, they would kill them.

V. 15 If we accept the 845 B.C. date, this is the first time the phrase “the day of the Lord” occurs in the Old Testament. “The day of the Lord” is generally a description of “the day of judgment.” In the Old Testament it is not the end of time. Nor is it necessarily something bad. It is just God coming in judgment. If a person is righteous “the day of the Lord” is a very good thing. If a person is unrighteous “the day of the Lord” will be a very terrible thing.

“As you have done, it will be done to you” means Edom is going to reap as they have sown. They are going to be dealt with as they have dealt with others. This verse is a key verse. In a condensed way this is explaining why all of this is going to happen (cf. Gal 6:7-9).

V. 16 “. . . just as you drank on My holy mountain . . .” Edom desecrates God's holy city (cf. v. 10).

“All the nations will drink continually.” Notice how this is going to be a continual thing. Obadiah is saying, “Do not think the Ammonites and Moabites are going to get off easy either.” Just as you, Edom, “drank on My holy mountain,” all the nations will drink continually. “They (all the nations) will drink and swallow. . .” What “they” will be “drinking and swallowing” will be “the wrath of Jehovah.” It is not Edom alone. “All the nations” are going to “drink and swallow” the wrath of God. “. . .drink and swallow . . .” is terminology used in the books of Revelation, Ezekiel and Daniel.

- V. 17** “Mount Zion” represents Jehovah’s stronghold, a place of protection; a place where they can find refuge. Back a few verses we have those fleeing the city for their lives and they ran into the Edomites who killed or enslaved them. But those who run to “Mount Zion” will find that refuge, they will escape.

“. . . and it will be holy,” that is, it will be made of up of redeemed people. Those who make up “Mount Zion” will reach a place that “will be holy.” Prophecy, “No.” Parallel, “Yes.” Here these people flee. They go to “Mount Zion” and there they find refuge, and it says that place is a “holy” place. Only those who are “holy” are going to be on this “Mount Zion.” It is going to be made up of only the redeemed people. That is exactly what Peter is saying in 2 Peter 3:13. Only the righteous are going to dwell in that “new heaven and new earth” (cf. Joel 2:32; Rom 11:26).

Then, Obadiah ends the book by using the word “possess” and “possession” a number of times. “. . . the house of Jacob will possess their possessions.” They were robbed. They were left destitute with nothing but the clothes they were wearing and maybe not even that, but “the house of Jacob will possess their possessions.” It will definitely come to pass. Where Edom was once wealthy, now “the house of Jacob” is going to have all the Edomites had.

- V. 18** If this prophecy takes place in 845 B.C., Israel and Judah are definitely separated and are nations that are not friends with one another. But this verse seems to prophesy that they will be united again. “The house of Jacob” would be “Israel,” and “the house of Joseph” would be “Judah.” They are going to be united again. These redeemed people will unite and be a devouring “flame.” And that “flame” will come and devour the house of Edom. “. . . they will set them on fire and consume them” and that is what you expect fire to do with “stubble.”

“For the Lord has spoken.” Once again, we begin with identified authority and end with identified authority. “The Lord has spoken” is written lest anyone forgot that Obadiah was not preaching his own words. He would tell them at the beginning and remind them at the end.

- V. 19** “Then those of the Negev will possess the mountain of Esau.” Again he is using the word “possess”. Obadiah is, basically, describing the entire territory that is part of Edom, all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. “Ephraim” and “Samaria”

are on the west side of the Jordan River. "Gilead" is on the east side. The "Negev" is probably referring to "Judah." God's people are going to be united, and unity is going to be demonstrated in that someone from Benjamin will possess Gilead which is a territory normally considered to belong to Israel.

What he is saying is, all of the land is going to be possessed by God's people. There is going to be a uniting of Judah and Israel and they will all be one nation. The literal fulfillment of these last few verses took place from 550-400 B.C. In 536 B.C. the Israelites were allowed to return to the land of Palestine under the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia. The land they took was not just Jerusalem but all the way up to the north and down to the south. They had most all of the territories that once belonged to Solomon and David. This is prophesying that all of that land is going to be possessed by God's people, and they will be united to the point that Benjamin will possess Gilead.

- V. 20** Obadiah is saying God's exiles scattered throughout the world will not be forgotten. They will, in fact, be brought back and united once again. The idea is that wherever God's exiles may be they will possess the cities of the Negev once again. The literal fulfillment of this would have taken place in 536 B.C. when Cyrus issued the decree for them to return. They did, in fact, possess those cities once again.
- V. 21** This verse ends the book on a triumphant note. God's people are ultimately triumphant! That is the way it is throughout the scriptures, especially in the book of Revelation. God's judgment will prevail and God's people will be triumphant.

JOEL

NAME:	Joel
MEANING:	Jehovah is God
DATE:	800 B.C.
AUDIENCE:	Judah
THEME:	Parable of the Locusts
SPECIAL NOTE:	Prophet of Pentecost
OUTLINE:	I. Plea for Repentance..... 1:1-2:11
	II. Plan for Repentance..... 2:12-17
	III. Purpose for Repentance..... 2:18-3:21

LESSONS:

God uses natural calamity to call a nation to repentance.

Judgment upon wicked nations is inevitable. The question is not IF but WHEN.

The day of God's judgment will either be a day of terror or a day of blessing, depending on the attitude of one's heart (one's true relationship with God).

Our freedom will not remain with us if we flagrantly violate the will of God.

Everyone in sin must repent. Genuine repentance brings blessings instead of calamities.

The goodness of God - 2:19-27.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all flesh.

JOEL INTRODUCTION

I. NAME.

“Joel” (JO’EL) means “Jehovah is God.” Other passages use phrases similar to Joel’s name (cf. 2:13; 3:17). There is a “play on words” in the Hebrew language as evidenced by these verses.

II. WRITER.

The writer of the book is Joel, the son of Pethuel (v. 1). There are thirteen Joels mentioned in the Old Testament. The birthplace and conditions of the writer’s life are unknown. Joel 1:1 is the only information we have about the prophet and that does not tell us much. Scholars generally consider Joel to have been a native of Judah, possibly an inhabitant of Jerusalem (cf. 1:13-14; 3:1).

III. DATE.

The book of Joel is much like Obadiah in that scholars give it two dates. The oldest date: 830 B.C., the more recent date: 500 B.C. Scholars are very divided concerning the date of Joel.

Internal Evidence to Support the 830 B.C. Date

- A. Joel lived during and after the period of Jehoshaphat (3:2).
- B. Judah’s enemies are: Philistines, Phoenicians (Tyre and Sidon) (3:4-6), Edomites and Egyptians (3:19). These countries were not enemies during the 500’s. The Israelite’s enemies during the 500-600 range were the Babylonians, Persians and possibly the Assyrians.
- C. The style of writing is very close to that of Obadiah.

IV. BACKGROUND.

When all seems to be lost the people are again given the promise of the Messiah. Doom will come on the nations but the ultimate victory of God’s people is predicted. The book starts out with a picture of gloom but it closes with brightness for God’s people.

We see Joel as a man of strength as he speaks from God but he is also seen as a man of tenderness as he presents a horrible picture. The prophets of God were bold men as they spoke His message but they also felt sick as they saw

what the people were doing to themselves. They realized the consequences of sin, but also knew what obedience and faithfulness to God would do.

This book has been called a “literary gem” because of its fluent and polished style. As a preacher, Joel is one of the best.

The main lessons of this book focus on the locust plague and its applications.

The prophet pictures the devastation caused by the locusts. They are:

As the sound of the crackling of a flame of fire (2:5).

Like a mighty marching army too strong to be stopped (2:4-9).

The people need to see that Jehovah is calling them to repentance (2:12-14).

Life in Joel’s time: Juvenile delinquency was on every hand, drunkenness commonly accepted and in great prominence. Divorces were destroying the homes of God’s people. Lawlessness was eating at the foundations of justice and morality. Godlessness was tearing down all forms of safety. The end result has been told to the people but it is only a matter of time. Only repentance and reformation of lives can divert the disaster that is coming.

V. JOEL’S RELATIONSHIP TO THE OTHER PROPHETS.

1:15	Isaiah 13:6
2:2	Zephaniah 1:15
2:3	Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 36:35
2:10	Isaiah 13:10
2:32	Obadiah 17
3:10	Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3
3:16	Amos 1:2; Isaiah 13:13
3:17	Ezekiel 36:11; Isaiah 52:1
3:18	Amos 9:13

VI. JOEL’S RELATIONSHIP TO THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Peter appealed to Joel in explaining the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21; Num 11:29 cf. Joel 2:28-32).

Paul uses the phrase, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom 10:13 cf. Joel 2:32).

Echoes in Revelation:

The moon turned to blood (Rev 6:12 cf. Joel 2:31).

The judgment as a harvest (Rev 14:17ff cf. Joel 3:13).

Treading the winepress (Rev 14:20; 19:15 cf. Joel 3:13).

The locusts (Rev 9:3-11 cf. Joel 2:1-11).

AFRICA'S GRIM STORY

AFTER THE DROUGHT - LOCUSTS

The 1984-85 famine in Africa was the worst in the continent's history. According to reports two million people died, half of them in Ethiopia.

While long awaited rains, coupled with an unprecedented international relief effort, have eased conditions in Ethiopia, the southern part of neighboring Sudan, wracked by civil uprising, is reporting severe food shortages.

In addition to civil unrest and weather upsets, much of the continent's food crisis can be attributed to government policies detrimental to food production.

Ironically, Africa is actually better endowed with agricultural potential than some other continents. According to the Fall 1985 issue of *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, Africa has an agricultural area of nearly 400 million acres, second only to Asia's 403 million acres. And Asia has far more people.

But regardless of Africa's present condition or potential there is a sign of ominous things to come. For the first time in 50 years, all of Africa's main populations of locusts were beginning to swarm in the last half of 1986.

Armies of Senegal locusts in West Africa, the desert variety along the Red Sea, migratory and red locusts in East Africa and the brown locust in southern Africa became active at the same time. Usually no more than two varieties are active simultaneously.

The damage locusts can do is legendary. A swarm covering a third of a square mile can number around 60 million and destroy 100 tons of crops in a single day.

During an infestation, one square mile can contain seven tons of locusts. The reproduction rate is phenomenal. A single female can produce up to 400 young in three months.

The rains that broke droughts in parts of Africa provided the necessary damp conditions the locust eggs need to hatch. "When the rains fail, the crops do not grow and there is famine," reported the English newspaper *The Observer*. "When the rains come, the crops grow, but so do the locusts--and there is still famine."

Compounding the problem, Africa's civil wars and overall economic deterioration have led to a severe cutback in national and regional pest control agencies established more than 40 years ago to monitor locust populations and conduct preventive programs.

“Technically speaking,” reports Lukas Brader of the Rome-based Emergency Center for Locust Operation, “locust plagues [as distinct from localized infestations] do not need to occur any more. But this requires effective national and regional surveillance and control structures.”

The United Nations-affiliated Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) announced an emergency plan to try to prevent, said *The Observer*, “a calamity of biblical proportions.” Various nations quickly responded to appeals for funds and supplies. Outbreaks have been brought under control in much of West and East Africa with only southern Africa remaining a danger zone according to the FAO. Nevertheless famines and pestilences are prophesied to be hallmarks of the end time (Matt. 24:7). The book of Joel speaks of locust plagues when “the day of the Lord is at hand” (Joel 1:4,15).

Some experts fear that 1986 may have been the beginning of several consecutive years of locust infestation. If unchecked at eruption points in Africa, the locusts could spread as far as India.

Africa, from all indications, will be reliant on the rest of the world for basic sustenance from now to the end of this age.

--Gene H. Hogberg
THE PLAIN TRUTH
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JOEL - EXPOSITION

CHAPTER 1

1:1-2 “Hear this, O elders . . .” Joel begins with the SHEMA as in Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is One!” Joel is going to try to teach the people that YHWH only is God, therefore, he begins his oracle in a way which would remind the people of the SHEMA.

“Has anything like this happened in your days . . .” Something that should be a warning is happening to the people. Nothing like this has ever happened in their life nor did it ever happen in their fathers’ days.

The verse, obviously, is past tense. Yet as we read on the writer is going to make it as real as if it were happening right now or just recently. Verse fifteen is placed in the future. What he is trying to do by using both past tense and future tense is to make it a very present reality. Something is about to happen. It is going to be bad and it will come soon.

1:3 The magnitude of this devastation will be something that will be retold from generation to generation. The devastation is going to be a locust plague. See the Chart, “The Locust Plague” (cf. Ex 10:2; Deut 6:4-9; Psa 78:4-8).

1:4 Joel has four classes of locusts: gnawing locust, swarming locust, creeping locust and stripping locust. Scholars have shown that locusts come in stages and that there are different types. This verse names the four strains of locusts.

See article entitled: “After the Drought - Locusts.” National Geographic, 1956 (?) article on locusts.

1:5 Joel is going to talk about the various people who are affected because of the locust plague.

- I. Drunkards (v. 5). They mourn because the sweet wine is cut off.
- II. Farmers (v. 11). They mourn because the wheat and barley harvest has been destroyed.
- III. Vinedressers and fruit-gatherers (v. 11). They mourn because the vines and all the trees of the field are dried up.
- IV. Priests (v. 13). They mourn because there is nothing to use for a grain offering or a libation.

Normally a drunk is visualized as a person who is not really in touch with society because he is not coherent. He does not care about the political situation. He does not care about the fact that there is trouble anywhere in the world. A drunk wants to have a place to sleep at night and not be bothered. He wants to have another bottle of wine to drink the next day. In this situation Joel is demonstrating how it affects everyone from the lowest to the highest person in the political scheme. This plague is one which is going to bring everyone to his knees.

There is going to be wailing and tears. Their lives will be so turned around they will not know what to do. What a shame it is that God has to resort to these methods to bring people back to reality and to realizing He is God and they are but just “dry leaves” underneath His foot if He so wills it. Too many times, the pompous, self-sufficient attitude is what ends up reigning in our hearts so God has to humble us. “Sometimes God has to ‘crush’ us before He can use us” (DP). The method of humbling them is not as important as getting them to turn their lives back to God.

1:6 “Mighty and without number” is the way locust plagues are usually described, blackening the sky. “Its teeth are the teeth of a lion, and it has the fangs of a lioness.” They are coming with a vengeance and they have the tools to do very serious damage.

1:7 “It has made My vine a waste, and My fig tree splinters.” They are Jehovah’s because He gave them. Anybody who has witnessed the devastation a locust plague can do would know just how vivid a description this is. The vine is completely worthless after the locust get through with it. The idea is that the fig tree is nothing but a stump. Think about the gnawing power of the locust. The wood of a fig tree is relatively soft wood, so they can bite into it and devour it, what they leave is nothing but a stump sticking out of the ground. The stripping locust described in verse 4 supposedly has the capability of taking the bark right off the tree and, if it is a soft wood, devour the trunk.

“Their branches have become white” shows that the bark has been stripped and the locust have gotten to the inner part of the tree.

1:8-13. Both spiritual and physical starvation.

1:8 Here the imagery is cast in the form of a woman who just married. Instead of wearing her beautiful bridal gown she has put on the garments of mourning. A wedding is a time of joy, happiness and optimism for the future. She has her man. She has some stability. So normally a wedding is something that is visualized as a very happy time. This woman is wearing sackcloth; garments not of joy but of mourning, of weeping. Even if the bridegroom was gone, and there was a child in the womb, there would still be a hope for joy. But notice the text calls her a “virgin” which means that she was on the threshold of a beautiful life. She was,

in fact, a bride, but now the bridegroom is gone and she is still a “virgin.” She has not been able to conceive, there is no hope at all for her future. If you lose the husband but you still have a child, there is some consolation. “Wail” or “lament” (cf. 2 Cor 7:9-10).

1:9 “The grain offering and the libation (drink offering) are cut off . . .” This is the sign of a broken covenant (cf. 2:14,17).

This book, like many of the prophets, is going to be an indictment against the priesthood. The book of Malachi, more than any other book, attacks the sins of the priesthood. They are the religious leaders. They are the ones who are to be setting the proper spiritual tone of the entire congregation, but they are not. So it is sarcasm for him to say, “the ministers of the Lord.” If they were truly being what they are called, “ministers of the Lord,” this calamity would have never come about. But because they have failed to be “ministers of the Lord” they are mourning like everybody else. A priest with a conscience would be taking this calamity very personally. The tendency is, not only in times past but, today as well, to blame our problems on someone else. Preachers have to realize they are in a position of leadership like the priests in the Old Testament. They needed to set the spiritual tone for the congregation.

1:10 Beginning with the Garden of Eden, land is personified as having feelings. Because of the sin of Adam and Eve, part of the curse was upon the land. The land was going to yield thorns and thistles rather than the bountiful fruit which God had originally created it to do. The land suffered during the days of Noah and the flood. Here is another passage showing the land is mourning because of man’s sins.

In the New Testament, Paul is going to do the same thing in Romans 8:18-25. There an inanimate object is being portrayed as having feelings; it groans, it longs, it is waiting. That is the way the Jews visualized the creation.

Not only does Joel personify the earth, but he shows the earth grieves or mourns because one of its beautiful products has been destroyed. One of things the land is able to do, and do well, has been ruined. The grain, the wine and the oil are good things the earth produces, but it is mourning because those good things have been destroyed.

1:11 Terminology like this is meant to show that all have shared in the devastation. No one has been exempt from the destruction brought about by the locusts. The farmers and vinedressers wail because the wheat and barley have been destroyed. Men can generally get by if the vines are merely damaged, but when “the harvest of the field,” the wheat and the barley are gone, the food on our tables is gone.

1:12 Notice the phrase, the “rejoicing dries up from the sons of men.” The happiness has gone as quickly as the crops. We have discussed the utter devastation brought about by the locusts, but we have not talked about the speed. Locusts work very quickly. When they attack a tree, it is just a matter of minutes before that tree is gone. When you have a million locusts come into a field they will be moving on to another field very quickly. The “rejoicing dries up from the sons of men” as quickly as the field is stripped. How tragic that is. They were rejoicing, not because of a spiritual relationship with God, but because they had material possessions. When the material possessions were taken away, their happiness was taken away. That is a lesson for us today as well: WHEN OUR HAPPINESS IS TIED TO POSSESSIONS WE COULD BECOME UNHAPPY VERY QUICKLY.

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (Phil 4:4). That is the basis of happiness in life, rejoicing in the Lord. All of our money may be gone, but our happiness will not be gone because our joy is rooted in God.

1:13 “Sackcloth” is associated with mourning and repentance. Sackcloth was a coarse, hairy material. It was very uncomfortable to the skin. But it was worn next to the skin as a symbol of the misery of the soul of the individual. Today, the closest thing to sackcloth is burlap. Did you ever have burlap next to your skin? Do you know how uncomfortable that is? Every time you feel uncomfortable it is a reminder of why you are wearing it. You are in mourning for something, and that discomfort represents the discomfort of the spiritual being.

He says, “. . . lament, O priests . . .” Joel is trying to get the priests to take the lead in repentance and fasting. He wants them to get back to leading the people the way they must go. There may be a time in your ministry when you look at your work and say, “I have not been doing my work well.” You must start being what you ought to have been. Like Paul, forget what lies behind and press on. Try to make the future better than the past. That is what Joel is doing with the priests. He is encouraging them to take the lead and do what God wants them to do rather than punish them because of what they have done wrong.

“Wail, O ministers of the altar!” Notice how he called them “ministers of the Lord” in verse 9. Now he calls them “ministers of the altar.” What is the altar? What purpose does the “altar” serve? Sacrifices! What were “sacrifices” for? Sacrifices were offered because of sin. But they are “ministers of the altar,” and Joel is saying, “Wail, you who should have been working on the people’s spiritual lives and helping them deal with the sin that they have in their lives. You are ministers of the altar! The more you remember your sins with a genuine attitude of sorrow and repentance the better it will be for you. These people had forgotten they had any sin at all.

“Come, spend the night in sackcloth.” That is not enjoyable. Every time the body turned that coarse material scraped against the skin and it would not be a very good night to rest. But, to do this is an illustration of genuine repentance.

“O ministers of my God.” Of all the people, the priests should have been the ones most concerned about what was happening, because they were to be God’s representatives to the people.

Here they were unable to do that which God has commissioned them to do. They should have said, “There is something seriously wrong here, the grain offering and libation are withheld. We need these things to give to God. Now God is not giving us the things we need to offer sacrifices to Him.” God is letting them know that things are not right. Incidentally, according to the law, the priests received a certain portion of the sacrifices. If there are no sacrifices the priests do not eat.

- 1:14** “Gather the elders . . .” Here they are told to gather the older respected men and to get them to take the lead in the fast. This is good advice even for today. When things are not the way they must go, the preacher or someone must approach the elders, or the older men of the congregation, and get them to “head up” this “solemn assembly.” Their solemn assemblies were usually joyous, but not this one.

Then “all” join in. “. . . your God . . .” Notice how Joel personalizes this. YHWH is your God. The book of Joel was written in 830 B.C. which means he is dealing with a people who are heavily entrenched in the worship of Baal and Asherah. “But you get together a solemn assembly and you cry out to the Lord. You go to the house of the Lord your God. This is your God. Baal is not your god. The Asherah is not your god. Molech, Chemosh, none of those are your god, YHWH is!” A good lesson from this verse: DO NOT WAIT UNTIL CALAMITY HITS BEFORE YOU PRAY TO THE LORD. Or to use the phrase in this verse, before you “cry out to the Lord.” How true that is. God hears many strange voices in times of sorrow.

- 1:15** “For the day of the Lord is near.” It has not come yet, but get ready because it is coming! This was not for the nations as the Jews understood the day, but it was for Israel! They felt this would happen to god’s people.

This is the first time the phrase “. . . day of the Lord . . .” is used. The day of the Lord is described as a day of destruction. Notice he does just say “. . . from God . . .” He says “it will come as destruction from the Almighty. This is the Hebrew word SHADDAI. In Genesis we often see the phrase EL SHADDAI which means “God Almighty.” SHADDAI is a word which means “the great and awesome power that one possesses.” The destruction that comes from the Almighty is

judgment executed upon the wicked by God's own omnipotence and greatness (cf. Isa 13:6; Amos 5:18).

1:16 God is giving them a severe reminder that things are very bad. And that reminder is meant to wake them up. The New Testament promises we are going to have trials. The trials are designed to be things to wake us up spiritually (if we need to be awakened) and to make us grow stronger (which is something all of us need). The parallel is evident. This book is so full of applications for today. Even though we are not being threatened by a locust plague, the fact of a slumbering, sleeping church is parallel to the slumbering nation of Israel. God may cut off the "food," the gladness and joy. We can translate that into a trial to wake us up!

1:17 "The seeds shrivel under their clods." When the ground is dried and parched, the seeds are not in good soft soil. They are in hard, dry ground with the sun beating down upon it, and they die.

"The storehouses are desolate" obviously because there is nothing in their "storehouses." "The barns are torn down" because they are not needed.

1:18 Now Joel discusses the animals. "The herds of cattle wander aimlessly" trying to find food. Here is the second time, and verse 20 will be the third time, in this chapter that Joel talks about things other than human suffering because of the sins of men. The land suffered in verse 10. The beasts suffer in verse 18 and verse 20. The point of specifically mentioning the sheep is that, unlike cattle that eat only grass, sheep will eat almost anything. But the sheep cannot even find weeds to eat.

According to the NASV footnote, the word "suffer" literally means "bear punishment." So the flocks of sheep are being punished not for their own sins, but for the sins of mankind. There are times in the scriptures when one man suffers because of the sins of someone else. Here is a passage where the animals are suffering from the punishment God has given to man (cf. Jon 3:5-8).

1:19 "To Thee, O Lord, I cry." Joel is not some preacher standing to the side, berating the people and scolding them because of their sins. He is becoming personally involved. When you have a genuine love and concern for the church, not "your" congregation only, but any congregation, you will cry to the Lord.

"For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness . . ." Apparently the locust plague has been followed by a terrible drought which dried up the land with fires. This is not uncommon. See "After the Drought - Locusts" enclosed with these notes. This article states how easy it was for a drought to follow the locust plague. When that happens you can see how fires could be the very next thing. The second natural calamity that God is going to bring upon the people because

of their sins is fire. The locusts are punishment #1, followed by the fire, punishment #2.

- 1:20** An interesting illustration. When one is totally devastated, to whom else can he turn but God? Joel is using a metaphor here by saying, “Even the beasts of the fields” know whom to turn to for deliverance. They have a enough intelligence to turn to God. Does man? Or is man more stupid than the animals?”

CHAPTER 2

- 2:1** A “trumpet” was used for many things in ancient Israel. It was used to start them on a journey, or to begin a festival (Num 10:1-10). Sometimes it was used as a warning when an approaching army would come. Sometimes it was to get the people motivated to go to worship. That is the way it is being used here. It is a warning to the people that they need to worship and appeal to God to keep this terrible calamity from happening (cf. Rev 9:3-11).

“For the day of the Lord is coming . . .” If Joel chose to use a calamity as a motivating factor, so can we. It should not be in every sermon, but there should be an occasional sermon when the preacher talks about Hell, the coming calamity. How awful it is going to be for those who are not found faithful! “The day of the Lord” is going to be a terrible day for some of those people sitting in the audience listening to that sermon. Maybe through some good sound biblical preaching, some hell-fire and brimstone preaching, someone can be moved from their indifference to repentance. That is what Joel is doing. He is saying, “Let’s sound an alarm! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble.” He wants to instill fear in the people because “the day of the Lord” is coming. Surely it was near!

- 2:2** Notice what Joel has to say about this “day.” This “darkness” is reminiscent of the darkness that came upon Egypt. That darkness was so thick you could not see the hand in front of your face (cf. Ex 10:21-24). Locust plagues often turned days to nights. So “the day of the Lord” refers to the darkness caused by the locusts (cf. Zeph 1:15).

“As the dawn is spread over the mountains . . .” Maybe Joel is paralleling the complete coverage of the judgment of God to the thickness of the locusts, the “darkness” that is caused by the locusts.

The question asked in 1:2-3 is now answered. Has anything like this happened in your days or in your fathers’ days? This is how the book begins. Now the question is answered. There has never been anything like it, nor will there be again for many generations.

NOTE: LI-PHENE, is a phrase that is going to give us some structure in the following verses (cf. vv. 3,6,10). LI-PHENE means “before.” “Before them” is talk-

ing about the locusts, and destruction is going to come. All three of these sections begin with LIPHENE. It is meant to demonstrate the unique nature of the locust invasion. “Before” the locust everything is going to submit to this judgment of God. “Before” the locust the earth is going to be consumed (v. 3). “Before” the locust the great peoples quiver (v. 6). “Before” the locust the earth quakes and the heavens tremble (v. 10). The power of the locust is that which ought to make everyone shake in fear.

2:3 “A fire consumes before them.” Perhaps he is talking about utter devastation. Normally, fire is not something that precedes the locust plague. Exactly what Joel has in mind here we do not know, but maybe he is talking about “one bad thing, followed by another bad thing, followed by a third bad thing.” Fire, then locust and then behind “them” a flame burns. Even after the locust are gone a continuing devastation takes place (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35).

“The land is like the garden of Eden . . .” What a vivid way of describing how beautiful it was prior to the locusts, and how ugly it was after.

NOTE: Verses four and following are as real a description as one is going to get. It is so vivid you feel as if you are there experiencing the locust plague firsthand.

2:4-5 “With a noise as of chariots.” Waves of locust are said to have an incredible noise. In Egypt and other places where locust plagues have occurred, the noise has been described as running horses (cf. Rev 9:9).

This is the way Joel describes it. The gnawing, eating and buzzing that happens in a locust plague are things incredible to listen to. Perhaps you are familiar with the way fire works on a log with its “crackling” and “hissing.” A locust plague is like that and the devastation is comparable to what a fire would do.

ARABIAN PROVERB: “The locust has the form of ten of the giants of the animal world, weak as he is --

Face of a mare,
Eyes of an elephant,
Neck of a bull,
Horns of a deer,
Chest of a lion,
Stomach of a scorpion,
Wings of an eagle,
Thighs of a camel,
Legs of an ostrich and
Tail of a serpent.”
Compare Joel 2:4.

2:6-7 All of this, including the next few verses, is meant to show how orderly, thorough, organized and efficient the locusts are. They are like a perfectly trained, consuming army (cf. Prov 30:27).

“. . . in anguish . . .” as a woman giving birth to a child.

2:8 “They do not break ranks.” An army that would “break ranks” is going to expose itself to weakness and to possible defeat. Joel is using the terminology of warfare here by saying, “These are so organized they will not be defeated.”

2:9 “They rush on the city . . . they climb into the houses.” This shows that everything is covered with locusts.

“They enter through the windows like a thief.” Eastern “windows” were not glass like we have today. They were open windows that had lattice so air could get through, but a robber could not. There was not anything from keeping the locusts from flying right into the home. So they entered “through the windows like a thief.” The lattice work would prove no obstacle for the locust.

2:10 “Before them (this is the last “before them”) the earth quakes . . . and the stars lose their brightness . . .” Joel is using apocalyptic language. The earth is not literally going to “quake” or the “heavens tremble,” but it is going to seem that way. Massive hoards of locusts coming sound like a herd of running horses. Everything seems to quake and tremble. The massive number of locusts is going to cause the sun and moon to grow dark and the stars to lose their brightness. This is showing how awesome locusts are. By using “sound” of locust and “vision” of darkness, Joel is hoping the people will understand it (cf. Isa 13:10).

This description of the calamities we have looked at in verses 1-11 are to be regarded as attempts by Joel to lay a foundation for repentance.

“In view of what is going to come do you not think you would be wise to repent?” Look what he says in verse 11.

2:11 “. . . before His army . . .” It is God’s army. It is an expression of His righteous indignation against the people who have forsaken Him and turned to wickedness. He is not going to tolerate it anymore! Nations in the East still call locusts “Yaish Allah” or “God’s army.”

What a powerful way to end this section: “And who can endure it?” No one, can by his own strength, his own power stand up under this. Man, by himself, is simply not capable of curtailing the wrath of God. Yet, on the other hand, Joel is going to show that man is not completely helpless. There is something man can do. This is biblical preaching. The Old and New Testaments are the same in this manner. Visualize the terrible, awesome “day of the Lord” and you are not going

to want to be one of those on whom God's wrath is going to be unleashed. It is more terrible than your worst nightmare. You do not want that to happen to you! "Who can endure it?" You can not. You are not going to be able to stand before God! What can you do about it?

2:12 "Yet even now, declares the Lord, return to Me with all your heart." That is what you can do about it. Every time a gospel sermon is preached there ought to be one thing clear and that is, "It is not too late!" The fact that the gospel is still being preached and the fact that it is still being heard show that it is not too late.

"Return," He said, "to Me." This shows us they had been with Him at one time in the past, now they need to come back. They need to return to the Lord. The kind of "return" He wants is "with all your heart . . ." This brings us back to the SHEMAH in Deuteronomy 6:4. "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart . . ." "Return to Me with all your heart . . ." Joel then gives a threefold way of returning which will reflect the sincerity of their repentance. ". . . with fasting, weeping and mourning . . ." Then he adds a fourth thing that is the key to it all.

2:13 "Rend your heart and not your garments . . ." God is tired of an outward show of repentance, and that is all that it is, an "outward show of repentance." Fasting, weeping and mourning are exteriors.

"Rending the heart" is what God really wants. When you "rend your heart," you are going to fast, weep and mourn (cf. Psa 51:17; Mic 6:8).

When people are completely devastated by tragedy, we need to do what Joel is doing right here. We need to remind them that there is hope!

He says, ". . . return to the Lord your God . . ." This is the second time in two verses he has used the word "return." And that is exactly what they must do. The word "repent" and the word for "turn" are often synonymous in the Hebrew (cf. Jonah 3:8-9). Thus, it gives a good idea of what repentance is to the Hebrew mind. It is a returning to God. The biblical story, from Genesis to Revelation is this: GOD HAS REACHED OUT TO MAN WITH REDEMPTION AND SALVATION. MAN HAS EITHER ACCEPTED OR REJECTED IT, BUT GOD CONTINUES TO MAKE REDEMPTION AVAILABLE AS LONG AS TIME GOES ON.

Man may have accepted that redemption but turned away from it. Now it is up to man to return. God is not going to do any more! It is up to man. That is why he says, "Who knows whether He will not turn and relent . . ." You return and then God turns (cf. v. 14). You are the one who makes the first move then God will respond to what you have done (cf. Lk 15). God wants more than "torn garments." He wants the people to come back! Come back visibly in worship and come back spiritually in heart, in commitment and dedication. He wants them

again. He does not want thousands of rams. He wants them to love kindness and mercy and to walk humbly with Him (Mic 6:8)!

“For He is gracious . . . relenting of evil.” Joel is reteaching them about God. People need to be taught about God then reminded about God again and again because they forget. The God that we serve is “gracious and compassionate” and in spite of all that we have done, “Come back and you will find a ‘gracious and compassionate’ God” (cf. Mt 12:7; 9:13).

2:14 “Even a grain offering and a libation.” This is the third time this phrase has been used (cf. 1:9,13). Rather than the locust coming and leaving nothing, God may turn “and leave a blessing behind Him,” a grain offering and a libation. Who knows whether He will do this?

2:15 “Blow a trumpet (cf. 2:1) in Zion . . .” “Gather together to demonstrate a change of heart! Join forces and join hands in doing what needs to be done to be right with God.” Joel is preaching a gospel message. He is saying, “People listen to me! Let us begin pooling our resources and start doing what is right instead of doing evil! Let us all ‘rend our hearts.’” He gives them specifics:

I. Consecrate a fast. This is not going to be an individual thing. It must be done jointly.

II. Proclaim a solemn assembly.

2:16 III. Gather the people.

IV. Sanctify the congregation.

V. Assemble the elders.

VI. Gather the children and the nursing infants. Notice how widespread this is going to be. Even the babies are included in this assembly. Everybody is affected by this, so everybody should be included and involved.

“. . . and the bride out of her bridal chamber . . .” The bridal chamber is the room where the bride puts on her wedding dress prior to the wedding. What Joel is saying is, “Nothing is more important than getting right with God!” A wedding, traditionally, is considered the most important day of a woman’s life. Joel is saying, “Let that bride come out of that bridal chamber and not be married now because we need to repent not rejoice! This is more important than getting married or anything else.”

2:17 How many times has Joel stressed the point that priests are “the Lord’s ministers” (cf. 1:9,13)? He is reminding the priests of who they are. People need to be reminded of who they are and what their responsibilities are.

“Weep between the porch and the altar.” Here Joel tells the priests to publicly shed tears in the presence of the assembly. The people of Israel became a laughingstock, a byword among the nations (Deut 28:37). They were very, very proud of their law of Moses and their relationship with God. In their present condition they had become a laughingstock.

“Why should they among the peoples say, ‘Where is their God?’” This is such a monumental biblical truth. It occurs so many places. ANY IDEA OR IMPRESSION OF GOD WILL ULTIMATELY COME FROM THOSE WHO CLAIM TO BE HIS PEOPLE. Christianity is understood by people of the world today, not because they read in the Bible what Christianity is, but from what they have seen in people and what they have heard. Do you think people know Christians do not lie because they have read in the Bible, “Do not lie.”? They know Christians do not lie because they have heard Christians say, “I am a Christian and I do not believe in lying.” What people know about the church and the God the church worships, they did not read in the Bible. They know it because of us. In Romans 2:24 Paul admonishes the Jews because their example is so pathetic in that people blasphemed the name of God “because of you.” What the Gentiles knew about Jehovah they knew from watching and listening to the Jews. And the Jews were such terrible examples that they blasphemed the name of God! The priests are now coming, making appeals to God on behalf of the people, which is what priests were supposed to do.

2:18 “Then the Lord will be zealous for His land.” Remember what He said about the land earlier? The Lord does not want to send locusts to devastate the land. He does not want fire to consume it. He wants the land to be bountiful and prosperous. That is the way He originally created the land. “Zealous” literally means “to be red,” or “to glow with anger.”

“And He will have pity on His people.” Those two things go together. When the Lord blesses the land, the people are blessed. When the Lord curses the land, the people are cursed. The welfare of the people is so intricately connected with the land. The priests are crying to the Lord and saying, “Spare thy people, O Lord do not make Thine inheritance a reproach.” Joel is asking, “Do you want to know how God is going to answer that cry?”

2:19 He says, “Let me tell you how God is going to answer that cry.” God will say, “Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied with them.” God tells them, “I am going to bless you beyond any dreams you may have.” “Grain” is a key word.

“ . . . I will never again make you a reproach among the nations . . . ” God wants His people to be blessed and therefore be an example to the world.

2:20 The “northern army” is the “locusts.” “Vanguard” means “front.” The “eastern sea” is the Dead Sea. The “western sea” is the Mediterranean Sea.

“ . . . its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up . . . ” What is Joel talking about? What is the “northern army?” The locusts, and they will die. “ . . . a parched and desolate land . . . ” They will not have anything to eat and the heat will kill them. People who have been in areas where there have been mass deaths of locusts say its foul stench is beyond description.

2:21 Remember in 1:10, “ . . . the field is ruined, the land mourns . . . ” But now God is saying to the land, “ . . . rejoice and be glad . . . ”

2:22 “Do not fear, beasts of the field.” In 1:18 we read the beasts of the field groaned. The prophets did this often. They preached to animate and inanimate objects. Here Joel is preaching to the land. He preaching to the animals. Jeremiah preached to the north, to Israel. But Israel did not exist anymore. They had been carried off into captivity. Obviously the message is for the people (cf. Rom 8:19-22).

2:23 “ . . . the early . . . rain . . . ” would occur in the autumn when it would cause the grain to sprout. The “ . . . latter rain . . . ” is that which causes the grain to mature in the spring just before harvest. Obviously the planting season in Palestine is different that in the United States.

2:24 Notice earlier he had said, “ . . . the storehouses are desolate, the barns are torn down, for the grain is dried up ” (1:17).

2:25 God’s punishment is great, but His blessings are greater, and the latter blessings are far greater than the former.

2:26 What is interesting about this is that prosperity is usually that which entices people to turn away from the Lord because they feel self-sufficient, they feel satisfied. But when blessings come after a tragedy, they have a tendency to be very grateful for those blessings. It is going to be awhile before the people are going to have a full stomach and be satisfied. And when they experience that feeling again, they will be grateful because they will have remembered what it was like to go without.

“Then My people will never be put to shame. They were “a reproach” (v. 17). But now they are not going to “be put to shame.”

2:27 Remember Joel's name means "The Lord is God." What Joel is doing is just preaching his own name. He says, "And you shall know that I am the Lord your God and there is no other." "And My people will never be put to shame." God has never wanted His people to be humiliated. The time is going to come when God's people are going to be proud they are His people. And they will know the Lord and have a very strong relationship with Him.

This verse is the reason for punishment and repentance.

NOTE: Verses 28-32 are quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17-21. These verses are telling us spiritual blessings are going to follow the material blessings.

2:28 "... on all mankind ..." Literally "... all flesh ..." The Jews considered there to be two kinds of "flesh" or people. The Jew and anyone who was not a Jew. So He poured out His spirit on the Jew (Acts 2) and He poured out His Spirit on the Gentile (Acts 10).

"... I will pour out My Spirit on 'all flesh'..." is saying, "All peoples are going to benefit from My spiritual blessings." It does not mean, as Acts clearly shows us, that every single person is going to have the spirit poured out upon them in a miraculous way. "... I will pour out My spirit on all mankind ..." means that all shall benefit from God's outpouring of the Spirit. This is why Peter said in Acts 11:15 "... the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us at the beginning."

"And your sons and daughters will prophesy." In Acts 21:9 Phillip has four virgin daughters who are prophetesses which shows us this part came true. What he is saying in Acts 2 is "... this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel ..." And what happened, the Spirit was poured out upon just the Twelve.

There is nothing in Acts about "... old men dreaming dreams and young men seeing visions." Unless we consider Paul having the vision of: "Come over to Macedonia and help us," or Peter seeing the sheet filled with the animals.

2:29 This verse shows there is going to be no distinction between servants and those who are masters (cf. Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11). If the Spirit wanted to give gifts to servants, so be it. Servants = slaves, compare Onesimus in the book of Philemon.

2:30-31 This is apocalyptic language, a common Jewish way of describing a significant and important day. No Jew considered these passages to be literal, but they understood apocalyptic language and its figurative usage. They understood the "... wonders in the sky ... and the moon into blood ..." to be figurative. Figurative language is used to make a point. Yet there are some who insist that the sun will literally turn to darkness and the moon into blood; and the blood, fire and col-

umns of smoke have to actually happen. It is because they do not understand the nature of apocalyptic language. Apocalyptic language is just a way of saying, "What a day this was! What an incredible day!"

NOTE: Matthew 24:29ff is apocalyptic language talking about the greatness of the day. Verses 24:29-31 have reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, not the second coming of Christ. Jesus does not talk about the second coming until v. 34 when He changes the language. Two questions are asked, "Tell us when these things will be," and "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" One of the things has a "sign" and one of them does not. The one that has the "sign" is the destruction of Jerusalem. What is that "sign?" It is the armies that are surrounding, "the abomination of desolation." Verse 29 - "But immediately . . . the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign (v. 30) of the Son of Man . . . He will send forth His angels . . ." (v. 31). In verse 34 we read, "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place." What "things?" Everything that He has spoken of prior to that statement.

Verse 36, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, not the Son, but the Father alone." Verse 37, "For the coming of the Son of Man . . . verse 39, "took them all away . . ." You see there was no sign for them. The second coming is going to be like that, but not the destruction of Jerusalem. That is why verses 29-31 are talking about the destruction of Jerusalem, because that is the "sign." The surrounding of Jerusalem with the armies is as clear a "sign" as the "sun being darkened and the moon not giving its light." Its apocalyptic language is not meant to be literal.

In response to a good brother's comment that the word "generation" in verse 34 can also mean "race." That word is used four or five others times in Matthew and never means "race." It means "the people that are living right now." You have to understand the way Matthew himself uses that word. And the way he uses it, it means "the people that are living right now." Jesus is saying, "You people, right here, this generation is not going to pass away." Premillennialists try to say that it means "race." And the Jewish "race," obviously, has not passed away. That makes a point into a non-point. What is it saying when you say, "this generation . . ." Jesus is trying to let them know how great a day that day of judgment for Jerusalem is going to be. It is going to be a terrible day of the Lord. There is going to be a "sign" with that day.

". . . the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light . . . is a quote from Isaiah 13:10. It is talking about the fall of Babylon. Did "the sun darken and the moon not give its light" when Babylon fell? It gave its light, but that is not the point. The point is, what a significant day! We are talking about Babylon, the greatest city in the world, the most dominate military power to exist for centuries, it falls!

Then He says, “. . . and the stars will fall from the sky . . .” That is quoted in Ezekiel 32:7 where it is talking about the distress of Egypt. When Egypt is losing its power. Isaiah 34:4 uses this same phrase to talk about the fall of Edom. Now we have the day of Pentecost and Peter says, “This is that which was spoken of . . .” and he quotes these verses (cf. Acts 2:19-20). When you understand apocalyptic language you understand that this is their way of saying, “This is a fantastic, incredible day.” Do not literalize it. It is not meant to be literal. The word “apocalyptic” means “that which is hidden.” Or “showcased in a shell.” That “shell” is figurative language. You break through the “shell” and what you have is the kernel of truth and that is: “You better be ready when this day comes because it is going to be an important day.”

Here are verses using figurative language and the phrase “. . . the great and awesome day of the Lord . . .” as descriptions of approaching judgment: Isaiah 13:10; 34:4; Jeremiah 4:23; Ezekiel 32:1-8; Amos 8:9; Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24; Luke 21:25; Revelation 6:12-13.

- 2:32** “And it will come about that whoever . . .” “Whoever” means “anyone.” God’s salvation is not to be restricted to the Jews only. It is for anyone who “. . . calls on the name of the Lord . . .” Incidentally, “. . . calling on the name of the Lord . . .” is a key phrase in the book of Acts. Many in the denominational world do not know that “. . . calling on the name of the Lord . . .” means, “will be delivered.” In other words, God will always provide a way of escape to those who turn to Him for refuge and salvation (cf. Obad 17; 1 Cor 10:13; Rom 11:26).

Notice how “. . . the calling . . .” is being contrasted. “. . . whoever calls on the name of the Lord . . . will be delivered . . .” and “. . . the survivors” will be those “. . . whom the Lord calls.” It is interesting how Joel, in the prophesy, and Peter, in recounting the prophesy, have a two-edged sword. (1) Man has to call upon the name of the Lord, but yet, (2) the Lord also calls that person. The order of events is: (1) God calls, and (2) man calls back. God has called us through the gospel (2 Thess 2:14, and we respond by “. . . calling on the name of the Lord”). Ephesians 1:3-14 explains this promise and its fulfillment.

CHAPTER 3

- 3:1** “. . . in those days . . .” This is a period of time rather than a specific point in time. It refers to the days of the early church. This is the most logical conclusion based on the fact that Peter, under inspiration, quoted Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2:17-21.
- 3:2** This prophecy in Joel can be your best argument when dealing with Premillennialists, if they are honest with the text. These Old Testament prophecies about

the restoration of Jerusalem refer to the church. We have Peter saying, “This is that which was spoken of through the prophet Joel..” (Acts 2:16).

The prophecy continues in Joel 3:1 saying, “. . . in those days . . . when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations, and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, then I will enter into judgment with them there . . .” A Premillennialist would say, “When has that happened? It never did happen, therefore the prophecy is yet to be fulfilled.” The text, however, will not allow that interpretation. The text says, “. . . in those days . . .” In what “days?” In the “days” spoken of in Joel 2:28-32. And the days spoken of in Joel 2:28-32 Peter applies to Pentecost and the days immediately following. When you talk about “. . . the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem . . .” being restored, you are going to have to talk about something that happened in the second chapter of the book of Acts. Jerusalem did not become a great kingdom again in the book of Acts. Therefore, the prophecy has to relate to something other than that.

“. . . valley of Jehoshaphat . . .” Literally, “Jehoshaphat” means “Jehovah judges.” So when the text says He is going to “. . . bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat . . .” it is talking about a judgment that God is going to make. He is making a judgment on all of the heathen nations and on all the people who are going to be disobedient to Him. That is what happens in the book of Acts. Christ is that salvation. He who does not accept Christ is going to be judged (cf. Jn 3:17-18).

3:3 “Traded a boy for a harlot . . .” shows how cheaply they considered human life, specifically a Hebrew life. They would give up a boy for one night with a harlot. Whether they were literally trading a boy for a harlot is not necessarily the point being made. There has been a complete disregard and lack of respect for God’s people. When the church is established it becomes a nation, a kingdom and it is going to be God’s force on the earth. God is speaking to the people about His intentions to restore the fortunes of the people in the future.

3:4-7 Notice the repetition of the word “recompense.” Even the word that is translated “return” is a word that is akin to the Hebrew word for “recompense.” Six times, in four verses, we find the word “return” or “recompense.” Basically he is talking about punishment. What they have stolen from God’s people, God is going to return, then punish them for what they have done.

3:8 He going to let them find out what it is like to be slaves and exiles.

NOTE: It is not an uncommon occurrence in prophecy to have a “backing up” in time, but still future to the time in which it is being spoken. Joel goes all the way forward and talks about the New Testament times, then talks about what is going to happen just before the New Testament times and the way God is going to bring about His judgment. Isaiah is noted for doing this as well. It is not related

to apocalyptic language. It is just a certain way of prophesying. It is like reading the end of the story and then going back and reading what happens in between.

Verses 1-8 were fulfilled by Alexander the Great.

3:9-11 He is giving a proclamation “. . . among the nations . . .” who are gathering themselves together for battle. These nations are being “prodded.” Since all have shared in the devastation of Israel, now all are going to be a part of the judgment. Even the weak are boasting that they are “mighty men,” but they are going to be brought low in the presence of God.

“Mighty ones” = angels (cf. Zech 12:8).

Notice the reverse of verse 10 in Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3.

3:12 “. . . valley of Jehoshaphat . . .” (cf. v. 2). This valley is a literal valley. It is in the wilderness of Tekoa SE of Jerusalem. That is where the Lord destroyed the forces of Moab, Ammon and Edom when they were threatening Jerusalem (cf. 2 Chron 20:1- 30). Jehoshaphat was king during that time. Joel is saying there is going to be another valley of Jehoshaphat.

“. . . I will sit to judge . . .” God appoints Himself judge of all the heathen nations.

3:13 “Put in the sickle . . .” (cf. Rev 14:15; Isa 63:1-6). Maybe John, under inspiration, is borrowing the language and the idea from Joel.

“. . . for their wickedness is great.” This is the reason God is going to pronounce judgment. Only when their iniquities are full (cf. Gen 15:16).

3:14 “. . . the valley of decision . . .” God makes His choice He chooses to destroy the ungodly and save the righteous. This is God’s decision, not man’s (cf. NAS footnote: God’s verdict).

3:15-16 Notice the apocalyptic language again. He uses this to talk about God’s judgment upon the nations, and for God’s salvation for His own people (cf. Mt 24:29-31; Acts 17:30-31; Isa 13:13; Amos 1:2).

3:17 A people that are completely committed to the Lord are like an impregnable city. Whereas the physical Jerusalem was so weak almost any foreign army could defeat without any trouble at all (cf. Isa 52:1; Ezek 36:11).

3:18 “. . . the valley of Shittim.” This is the third valley. The three valleys are:

I. The valley of Jehoshaphat (v. 12) where God is going to judge,

- II. The valley of decision (v. 14) where God pronounces His verdict upon the people and
- III. The valley of Shittim (v. 18) is where those whom the Lord chooses for salvation will be brought.

You go from a place where God is going to judge to a place where God pronounces His verdict, then to a place of beauty, rest, peace and security.

NOTE: When you want to preach on “The Day of Judgment” preach Joel chapter 3. Tell about the three valleys and how we also will pass through them. When all of the nations will stand before the Lord we will be in the valley of Jehoshaphat. From that valley we will be brought to another valley and that is the valley when we stand personally before God. The valley of decision where God says, “You go this way.” Or God says, “You go that way.” Then the third valley. The valley of Shittim. The valley of beautiful lands and of security and beautiful life, etc. which we call “heaven.” This is the third and final valley, the eternal valley.

“Spring” or “fountain” (cf. Amos 9:13; Zech 14:8; Jn 4:14; Rev 22:1).

3:19 Although it is not called a valley a contrast is given in this verse. Those nations that opposed God are going to have His wrath poured out upon them.

3:20-21 This is a typical theme in the Old Testament. God may allow His people to suffer for awhile, and they may even die in suffering, but “I will avenge their blood which has not been avenged,” He says. Because bad things happen to Christians does not mean that God does not see and does not intend to avenge. We must learn to wait on the Lord. But the question is asked, “How long does God expect us to wait until we have deliverance?” The answer to that is, you may be waiting until after you die. The deliverance may not come in this life. There is no promise that it will come. In Revelation 6:10 the souls under the altar are crying for vengeance. They died in service to the Lord. They never received, in this life, their salvation, but yet they were avenged.

“For the Lord dwells in Zion” is the reason they will be avenged. God is a God who will avenge because He dwells with His people.

Fulfilled (cf. Heb 10:1-4; Rom 3:21-26; Heb 9:15).

JONAH

NAME:	Jonah
MEANING:	Dove
DATE:	780 B.C.
AUDIENCE:	Israel and Nineveh
THEME:	God's messenger is to deliver God's message
SPECIAL NOTE:	A book of miracles
OUTLINE:	I. Running from GodCh 1 II. Running to GodCh 2 III. Running with God.....Ch 3 IV. Running ahead of GodCh 4

LESSONS:

God's love is for all nations.

It is possible for people to have Jonah's attitude without his honesty.

It is utterly impossible to escape from God.

Satan always has a ship ready whenever we get ready to run away from our God-given responsibilities.

The way of disobedience is downward.

It is easier to obey than run away.

You may go very far, but God knows where you are.

Running from God may be running into a storm.

What a person may do is limited by his obedience.

God can rescue when nobody else can.

The Lord's servant is to preach God's word and leave the results to God.

The will of God is to be preferred to patriotism.

Souls and life are more important than gourds and houses.

JONAH INTRODUCTION

I. NAME.

“Jonah” means “Dove.” Doves were often used as messengers, like carrier pigeons. A dove is generally used as a symbol of peace.

II. WRITER.

Although the book does not state that Jonah wrote the book tradition is strong in holding that view.

III. DATE.

800-740 B.C. Jonah is a real person who lived during the time of Jeroboam II. 2 Kings 14:25 mentions Jonah and states that he lived at Gath-hepher. Gath-hepher is a real city which is about four miles NE of Nazareth. This is the time when Assyria has risen to prominence. Assyria had bloody battles, such as the battle of Qarqar (mainly with Syria, but Israel and Judah also joined in). Ahaz had joined in that battle during the reign of Shalmeneser III. The Black Obelisk of Shalmeneser records this particular battle of Qarqar.

IV. INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BOOK OF JONAH.

Basically, there are three main interpretations:

- A. MYTHICAL. It is a myth that grew out of some incident in the history of Israel. It is like a fairy tale or folklore story (wrong).
- B. ALLEGORICAL. The story is an allegory of Israel's captivity, repentance and restoration to its land (wrong).
- C. HISTORICAL. Jonah was a real man, swallowed by a real fish and a real vine grew up to provide shade for him (correct interpretation).

See articles entitled: “Nineveh, That Great City” and “Great Truths From The Book Of Jonah.”

V. BACKGROUND.

Jonah's behavior might be more easily understood when we realize he is a zealous patriot for the Jews. He is like a lot of the prophets and most of the Jews who had a strong nationalist feeling. They were very patriotic! The Assyrians

had inflicted so much suffering on the world, and were turning their wrath toward the Israelites. It seemed more logical to Jonah to destroy that pagan nation than to save it. This nation has been so oppressive, so wicked and so brutal in their treatment of other nations that when God tells this zealous Jew, this patriot, to go and preach the message of salvation to them it does not seem right to him.

The companion book to Jonah is Nahum. Jonah tells about the salvation of Nineveh and Nahum tells them it is too late and they are going to be destroyed. In fact, they were destroyed a few years after the nation's prophecy. Nahum's date is 630 B.C. and in 612 B.C. the Assyrian nation no longer existed.

Jonah is a book of miracles:

The storm and its consequent stilling.

The preservation of Jonah in the belly of the great fish.

The gourd in a night.

The worm that smites the gourd.

Jesus endorsed the second of these miracles (Mt 12:38-41; 16:4; Lk 11:29-32). The book contains no direct prophecies about Christ. Yet, Jesus directly compares His approaching experience in the grave to that of Jonah in the fish.

Jonah's preaching is contained in only eight words (3:4). He was a preacher who hoped that he would fail. But this converted prophet made a great preacher. It is good to see that the final message of Jonah is one of tenderness.

Jonah could and did preach repentance rather than conversion to Judaism by the Ninevites because the Patriarchal System extended from Adam to Christ. Only the Jews were set apart from this arrangement by the special provisions of the Law of Moses.

Jonah shows the breadth of divine love as contrasted with the narrowness of human sentiment. The "glory of God and the salvation of man through Jesus the Christ" is the theme of the entire Bible. Jonah deals with one great aspect of this theme; God is the God of all nations!

Most people remember Jonah only as a story about a whale. We have looked so long at Jonah as a "Great Fish" story that we have missed the true message that there is a "Great God." This book presents to us a God of compassion, love, longsuffering and strictness. We discover that God is the God of all peoples.

VI. EXPANDED OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF JONAH.

- A. Chapter One - Disobedience: Running Away From God.
 - 1. Commission of Jonah..... 1-2
 - 2. The Contrariness of Jonah..... 3-10
 - 3. The Chastening of Jonah 11-17
- B. Chapter Two - Prayer: Running To God.
 - 1. Prayer for Jonah..... 1-6
 - 2. Vomit of the Big Fish 7-9
 - 3. Preservation of Jonah 10
- C. Chapter Three - Preaching: Running With God.
 - 1. The Commission Renewed 1-3
 - 2. They Cry for Repentance 4
 - 3. The Consequence of Repentance..... 5-10
- D. Chapter Four - Complaint: Running Ahead Of God.
 - 1. The Displeasure of God 1-3
 - 2. Demonstration by Jehovah 4-10
 - 3. The Declaration of Jehovah 11

Most people are probably like Jonah in these categories. This outline can be used as a mini-sermon for teenagers.

NINEVEH, THAT GREAT CITY
by
Charles F. Myer, Jr.

The secrets of Nineveh have been revealed and a deeper appreciation of the biblical message has been achieved.

Nineveh and its citizens receive major recognition in the Bible. They are mentioned in Genesis, 1 Kings, Isaiah, Jonah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Matthew and Luke.

The amount of space Nineveh occupies in scripture attests to the city's importance. Even Jesus made reference to it in His use of the Ninevites as a standard of judgment against the generation of His day.

The city was located on the Tigris River across from the modern city of Mosul, Iraq. The walls that encompassed the ancient city were eight miles in circumference. This large city wall no doubt was responsible for the reputation that Nineveh had concerning its size.

Within the walls were two large mounds that contained the heart of the archaeological treasures. One, Quyunjiq, has been excavated extensively while the other is practically undisturbed.

The second mound is called Nibi Yunus (The Prophet Jonah) and is the site of a modern village plus a cemetery. Therefore, an excavation at the present time is precluded.

The archaeological discoveries can be attributed to Paul Emile Botta who served as the French consul in Mosul. He received this appointment in 1840 after he had made several significant contributions as a traveling naturalist.

When Botta took the next assignment of the consular's office, he was encouraged by the secretary of the Societe Asiatique de Paris to make scientific explorations of the mounds along the Tigris.

Botta's initial visits produced little results, except that he gained the reputation among the natives as the man who collected objects or clay with unusual characters inscribed upon them.

This seemingly unimportant pastime took a change for the better when a servant brought the exciting news of the discoveries of sculptures and inscribed clay brick at the site of Khorsabad, northeast of Nineveh. Later Botta excavated at Nineveh and provided the Louvre with an exhibition of Assyrian materials. In connection with this exhibit, he published *Monuments de Ninive*.

The name of Nineveh has an ancient and interesting past. In the cuneiform sources, the name *Ninua* seems to contain an older form *Ninuwa*, which was reflected later in the writing of biblical Hebrew.

Another extremely fascinating observation is the formulation of the logogram that also was used to designate the Assyrian capital. The sign was an enclosure with a fish within its confines. This literary phenomenon has caused much speculation and discussion in scholarly circles. The earliest reference to Nineveh is from a clay tablet written in the 21st century B.C.

The durability of the clay tablet and the work of the archaeologists have cooperated in the preservation of this spiritual, societal and cultural paradox. The prophets utilized this object lesson in their preaching to the children of Israel.

Archaeologists who have worked at the site after Botta's initial find were Layard, Campbell, Thompson, Hutchinson, Hamilton and Mallowan. Exhibitions made by these men were conducted sporadically from 1842 through 1932.

In the eighth century B.C. under the leadership of Sennacherib, the site was chosen to be the capital of the expanding Assyrian kingdom. The influence of Nineveh was felt in Egypt as Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal were continuing to broaden the power of the Assyrian kingship.

Ironically, as the kingdom was growing, it also was drawing nearer to its end, for in 612 B.C., a coalition of the Medes and Babylonians struck the fatal blow to the mighty Assyrian capital. The power of the empire fell, but fortunately the literary impact of Ashurbanipal's library continues to give information about the city that epitomized pride and arrogance in the Old Testament.

Nineveh was built into a mighty city by the three powerful kings of Assyria, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. Each of these not only added to the territorial expansion of Assyria, but each continued to build and expand the architectural wonders of the ancient city. As with the Tower of Babel, these kings saw a correlation between architectural expansion and human pride.

One note of irony is seen in the fact that the Assyrian kings not only were building a military based society, but they also were accumulating vast treasures of literary material.

Inscriptions on monuments often attest to the ferociousness of the Assyrians. A stele of Esarhaddon's shows two princes who are secured with hooks in their lips. Another palace relief shows the inhabitants of Lachish bringing their booty to the king with the inscription, "Sennacherib, King of the World, King of Assyria, seated on his throne, inspects the plunder of La-Ki-su" (2 Kings 18:14-19:37).

Nineveh was one of the greatest cities of Mesopotamia, and after its tumultuous fall in 612 B.C., it became an object lesson as predicted by biblical prophets.

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GREAT TRUTHS FROM THE BOOK OF JONAH

The prophet Jonah lived in the Galilean city of Gath-hepher (about four miles north of Nazareth) in the reign of Jeroboam 11 (793-753 B.C.), king of Israel (cf. 2 Kings 14:25). Jeroboam 11 was northern Israel's most powerful king, and during his administration the borders of the nation were expanded to their greatest extent since the time of David and Solomon. Assyria, however, five hundred miles to the east, was a constant threat. The fact of the matter is, due to Israel's progressive rebellion, the prophets Hosea and Amos, contemporaries of Jonah, had declared that Jehovah would use Assyria as an instrument of punishment against His people (cf. Hos 11:5; Amos 5:27). Any patriotic Israelite would have longed for Assyria's destruction!

One can scarcely imagine, therefore, the consternation that must have filled Jonah's heart when he received the Lord's word instructing him to proceed to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, with a divine message. Although the prophet's brief declaration to Nineveh was one of judgment, nonetheless, Jonah was aware of the fact that Jehovah is a "gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness" (4:2). Hence, it was certain that if the inhabitants of that great city were responsive to his message, Heaven would certainly spare them. And Jonah did not want that.

Accordingly, Jonah went to Joppa where he boarded a ship bound for Tarshish, a Phoenician colony on the SW coast of Spain some 2,000 miles to the west. The express design of his trip was to flee from the presence of Jehovah (1:3). But, as every Bible student knows, his plans were soon thwarted. Where men propose, God can dispose! When a great storm arose, and the inmates of the vessel feared for their very lives, Jonah confessed that he, as a refugee from the Lord, was the cause of the calamity. Though the prophet's sailing companions did not like the idea, they ultimately were forced to accept Jonah's suggestion that he be thrown overboard.

Down he went into the dark depths of the Mediterranean, seaweed swirling about his head (cf. 2:5). Presently, he was devoured by a great creature of the deep. One might almost say that the Lord sent Jonah to school for three days, and the classroom was the belly of a great sea-monster. The prophet matriculated wonderfully well, graduating with a diploma in "mission responsibility"!

Making his way to Nineveh, a journey that would have taken more than a month and thus provided ample time for sober reflection, Jonah entered the great city with his blunt message (consisting of only five words in the Hebrew text): "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Amazingly, there was mass repentance, from the king (Ashurdan III, according to Assyrian records) down to the commoner.

Jonah was quite distraught at this turn of events and he despaired, even to the point of wanting to die. Resolutely he perched himself on a hilltop nearby, eagerly watching the city in hopes that the Lord would yet destroy it. His education was still incomplete! As he sat in the scorching sun, God caused a shady vine to grow up for his

refreshment and the prophet was glad. On the following day, however, Jehovah sent a worm to smite Jonah's vine, and as the blistering sun beat upon his head, the man of God again lapsed into a state of abject depression. Then came Heaven's stinging rebuke. The Lord in effect said: "Jonah, why is it that you are so concerned with this vine – a mere plant which is temporal, and for which you did not labor, and yet, you evidence utterly no concern for the hapless inhabitants of Nineveh?" The penetrating inquiry threw a divine floodlight upon the pathetic values of the man from Gath-hepher.

The book of Jonah is filled with valuable information and timeless lessons. Perhaps we could reflect upon a few of these matters.

First, we should note that this marvelous narrative has suffered the brunt of the critics' barbs for a long while. Because of the incident of Jonah being swallowed by the sea-creature, many modern scholars contend that the document is pure *fiction* (cf. E. J. Goodspeed, **How to Read the Bible**, p. 149). Jesus Christ, however, did not so view it. He appealed to the narrative as genuine history (cf. Mt 12:39-41), and this settles the issue for all who have any regard for the Saviour's deity. Aside from the fact that this event doubtless involve a miracle, the circumstances are not beyond the realm of possibility even from a natural viewpoint (as employed in the providential operations of God). In fact, a number of similar cases have been documented in relatively modern times. Near the beginning of this century, a seaman was swallowed by a large sperm whale near the Falkland Islands. After three days, he was recovered, unconscious but alive, though there was some damage to his skin (A. J. Wilson, **Princeton Theological Review**, XXV, October 1927, p. 636). Moreover, some critics argue that the book of Jonah depicts the prophet as being swallowed by a "great fish" (1:17), whereas the N.T. suggests that the creature was a "whale" (Mt 12:40). And, as any schoolboy knows, a whale is a animal, not a fish. The fallacy of this ill conceived argument lies in the fact that both the Hebrew word *dag*, and the Greek word *ketos*, are generic terms that can apply to any aquatic creature (cf. ASVfn). There is no error here.

Second, the book of Jonah demonstrates the sovereignty of the Almighty as He employs His creation to accomplish the divine plan. The Lord controlled the elements of weather(1:4,11,13,15; 4:8), and He prepared a sea-creature, a vine and a worm to do His bidding (1:17; 4:6-7).

Third, this inspired document reveals the international interest of God, even in the Mosaic era. Though Jehovah was working primarily through the Hebrew nation as an instrument for the sending of the promised Seed (Gen 22:18), nevertheless, His compassion for all the people of the earth was abundantly manifested. And the sending of the "missionary" Jonah to these Gentile Ninevites was a clear demonstration of this.

Fourth, this narrative illustrates a truth so frequently suggested in the Old Testament, namely, that the Lord, not man, is in control of the destiny of nations. Jehovah rules in the kingdoms of men and disposes of them according to His divine standard (cf. Psa 22: 28; Prov 14:34; Dan 2:21; 4:17). Those who think that nations

stand or fall because of a “strong national defense” are woefully ignorant of biblical principles. Nineveh was given forty days to repent; as a result the nation was spared destruction for about a century and a half. Later, however, when Assyria degenerated again, she was destroyed and the prophet Nahum addresses this very matter. Nineveh fell to the Babylonians in 612 B.C.

Fifth, the book of Jonah demonstrates that ancient peoples who were outside of that Mosaic covenant relationship with Jehovah were nonetheless accountable to Heaven’s moral law. Jehovah looked down upon Nineveh and observed the *wickedness* of this people (1:2). Since sin is the transgression of divine law (1 Jn 3:4; cf. Rom 4:15), the Ninevites were obviously subject to such. This powerful truth is in direct conflict with the modern theory which contends that those who are “outside of the church” are not subject to the marriage law of God (the design of which is to regulate human morality (cf. 1 Cor 7:1; Heb 13:4). The whole purpose of this novel concept, of course, is to justify adulterous relationships within the family of God!

Sixth, this record reveals the power inherent within the word of God when such comes into contact with honest and good hearts (cf. Lk 8:15). Though Jonah’s message was very brief (as indicated above), it produced the desired effect. Again, some critics have faulted the divine account at this point, claiming that so trifling a sermon could hardly have produced the results described. But the objection, which stems strictly from subjective bias, ignores the biblical evidence, not the least of which is the testimony of Christ that “the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah” (Mt 12:41). Besides that, historical records reveal that the notable city had suffered severe plagues in 765 and 759 B.C. The soil had thus been conditioned for Jonah’s “revival.” Too, somehow or another the citizens of Nineveh had learned of the prophet’s “resurrection” from the belly of the “fish,” for, as Jesus noted, Jonah was a “sign” to that generation even as the raised Lord would be to His (cf. Lk 11:30).

Seventh, this instructive account, together with the inspired N.T. commentary which discusses it, underscores an important dimension to repentance. Jesus declared that “the men of Nineveh *repented* at the preaching of Jonah” (Mt 12:41), while the book of Jonah itself informs us that God “saw their [the people of Nineveh] works, that they *turned from their evil way*” (3:10). Thus, repentance is not, as some allege, a mere sorrow for sin; rather, it requires a turning away from evil conduct. Moreover, this passage reveals that repentance is a *work*, and since repentance is essential to salvation (Lk 13:3,5; Acts 17:30), it conclusively follows that salvation is not exclusive of all types of works!

Eighth, an intriguing passage in the book of Jonah illustrates a vital point about the punishment of the wicked after death. In graphically poetic language, the agonizing prophet described his horrible ordeal in the sea-monster’s belly as an experience akin to being in “hell”. He exclaims: “I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord . . . out of the belly of hell cried I” (2:2). [Note: the Hebrew term is *Sheol*; here it denotes the abode of the wicked prior to the judgment.] Since crying out by reason of *affliction*

certainly indicates conscious suffering, one may conclude that the state of the wicked dead is that of conscious torment -- a truth affirmed elsewhere in the sacred record (cf. Lk 16:23; cf. 2 Pet 2:9 ASV). J. W. McGarvey has an excellent discussion of this point in his essay, "Destiny of the Wicked," **Lard's Quarterly**, II, pp. 429-430).

Ninth, Jonah's message to Nineveh reveals that prophecy is sometimes *conditional*. The prophet declared that the great city would be destroyed in forty days; yet, it survived for a century and a half beyond that time. Clearly, therefore, the prediction of doom was conditioned upon Nineveh's response to the prophetic message. Millennialists would do well to learn this principle of prophecy. For example, Israel was promised an inheritance of the land of Canaan. That promise, however, was conditioned upon their fidelity to God (cf Josh 22: 4-5; 23:1ff.), and the time eventually came when they lost their deed to Palestine. Modern Israel has no intrinsic "right" to that Middle Eastern real estate.

Tenth, the book of Jonah presents a beautiful type of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Though some modernists argue that the concept of a bodily resurrection from the dead was unknown in Old Testament times, Jesus demonstrated otherwise. He declared: ". . . for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea-monster; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Mt 12:40). Clearly, the Lord viewed Jonah's three-day entombment as a foreshadowing of His resurrection from the grave, by which, of course, Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom 1-4).

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul wrote: "For whatsoever things were written afore time [i.e., the O. T. scriptures] were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope" (15: 4). Surely the foregoing points of truth, as gleaned from the delightful book of Jonah, are illustrative of the truth of this rich passage. Why not take some time and refresh yourself with a review of the edifying material in the book of Jonah?

Wayne Jackson
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JONAH EXPOSITION

CHAPTER 1

1:1 “Jonah” is mentioned three times in the New Testament (cf. Mt 12:39ff; 16:4; Lk 11:29-32). This lends historicity to the character. Jesus does not give any indication that Jonah is folklore, but gives every indication that it is historical (cf. 2 Kgs 14:25).

1:2 “Nineveh” is first mentioned in Genesis 10:11; one of the oldest cities known to man. It was probably established around 5000 B.C. It was over 4,000 years old by the time of Jonah.

“. . . the great city . . .” Scholars tell us Nineveh was 60 miles in circumference, and from one side of the city to the opposite was eight miles. If a man walked from the north gate to the south gate, or the east gate to the west gate, he would have an eight mile walk within the city walls.

The word “great” occurs fifteen times in the book of Jonah.

“. . . their wickedness . . .” Nineveh was long noted for the wickedness and cruelty of its people. When Jonah went to the city it was in a political and military “low.” The Battle of Qarqar had most likely just taken place and the people had lost much of their strength and their pride because (although they did not lose the battle) the battle was so devastating manpower wise. Jonah was in the city at a critical time.

The best evidence we have on Nineveh’s condition, besides the fact that they were very willing to repent which normally would not have taken place, is 2 Kings 14:25-27. Jonah was prophesying at that time and Jeroboam was reassured that Nineveh was not going to come and harm them during his reign.

1:3 Jonah is “resigning” his job as a prophet. He is trying to flee “. . . from the presence of the Lord . . .” which is something no one can do.

“. . . from the presence of the Lord . . .” is going to be a recurring phrase in the following verses 1:3(2),10. “Tarshish” is in southwest Spain.

1:4 “. . . the Lord hurled a great wind . . . a great storm . . .” The greatness of God is demonstrated in that He is able to use everything He has at His disposal. The wind and the storm are at His command. Psalm 104:4 tells us that God uses the winds and the storms to accomplish His purposes (cf. Heb 1:7).

1:5-6 “. . . call on your god.” Psalm 107:28 talks about how God is One who, when they cry to Him in their distress, will hear them. That is what these people are trying to do, but that is kind of the way it goes in all times.

Notice the irony of verse 6. A pagan is rebuking a prophet of God to pray to his God for deliverance. Jonah was acting as if he were the only atheist on board.

1:7 “. . . cast lots . . .” Proverbs 16:33 tells us God uses the “casting of lots” so that people may know what His will is. But we really have not had that much evidence of non-Israelites using it, other than this verse. Nonetheless they are using it and they do feel that God speaks through this medium. In this case they are right.

1:8 These sailors knew nothing about Jonah.

1:9 Jonah makes a rather impressive confession. Although his actions were not conveying “fear” as God would have one fear Him. When you “fear” God you will be obeying His every wish. But Jonah is fleeing from the presence of the Lord.

1:10 “How could you do this?” is to be understood as, “How could you flee from a God like this? Why would you think you could ever get away from His presence?” They are asking good questions. He should have known better. He is a prophet of God but does not have much common sense. It is amazing how some of the most unlikely people will teach you a very vital lesson.

“. . . because he had told them.” At least Jonah is being completely honest with them at this point. He is saying exactly what he is doing and why he is fleeing.

1:11-13 Apparently the sailors saw a redeeming quality in Jonah that made them want to save him. As far as they were concerned, throwing him overboard would bring certain death. These are decent men and do not want to have a part in killing someone. What Jonah told them to do, they did not want to do. Apparently the sailors are not believing what Jonah told them to do.

1:14 “. . . O Lord . . .” Notice they are using the word YHWH three times. These are not Hebrews, but they are using the personal name of God.

What did they know about YHWH? Was that the first time they had ever heard His name in verse 9? Interestingly, they are calling on the Lord. They are not calling on any “god” of their own. They are calling on the Lord!

What they are saying is really two things:

I. Do not let us perish because of what this man has done.

II. Do not put innocent blood on us.

They appear to be in a dilemma because of what this man has done, and that does not seem fair. But yet, they do not want to put innocent blood on themselves by throwing Jonah overboard.

1:15 The text does not elaborate any further. How much more discussion went on we do not know. They finally realized that Jonah had to be thrown overboard. Then the sea stopped its raging. Even in the disgrace of a fleeing prophet, God found a way to glorify Himself. Jonah is God's representative but he has done a shameful job of representing his God.

1:16 Some have said that they accepted Jehovah as their sole Deity, or that they, from this point on, worshiped Him alone. There is no reason to suppose that to be true. They feared the Lord greatly and are offering a sacrifice to Him.

What happened to Jonah impressed these men. Sometimes God will use us even when we are not trying to help Him.

“. . . and made vows.” The “vows” that they took are also unknown. It is not the purpose of the text to explain what type of vows they made or how they carried them out.

1:17 “. . . a great fish . . .” This is translated from the Hebrew Masoretic Text. The Hebrew apparatus does not deal with the term. In Matthew 12:40 the word is translated “sea monster” in the NASV. In the ASV Matthew 12:40 is translated “whale,” but is footnoted “sea monster.” The KJV translates the word as “whale” with no footnote. Other versions translate this simply as “the fish . . .”

A fish large enough to swallow a man is not the miracle, but that large a fish being at the right place at the right time is.

CHAPTER 2

2:1 “. . . the Lord his God . . .” It is interesting the text should say this. Jonah has not been acting like the Lord was his God. But as God's Book teaches us, He is slow to anger and is full of love and kindness. So God still considers Jonah to be His servant, and Jonah is learning more about His God.

Chapter one emphasized how Jonah was fleeing from the presence of the Lord. In chapter two Jonah is praying to the Lord his God from “. . . the stomach of the fish.” You might imagine that if you were going to be able to get away from the presence of God, in the belly of the fish down in the depths of the sea would be a good place. But God is there and Jonah realized it and prayed to Him.

NOTE: Verse 2 and following is a beautiful psalm. We are thankful it has been preserved for us to study and to look deeply into the thoughts of Jonah as he is

meditating about his situation in the blackness of the fish's belly, the depths of the sea. The psalm really shows the terror and helplessness that Jonah is feeling, and how this helplessness has brought him to the realization that salvation is found only in the Lord.

2:2 "Thou didst hear my voice." Jonah seems almost to be surprised by the truth of these statements. It is almost as if he were saying, "After what I did, God is still hearing me?!"

"Sheol" = pit or grave.

2:3-4 "For Thou hadst cast me into the sea." Men threw him into the sea (1:15), but Jonah knew ultimately that this action was from the Lord.

In the Hebrew there is an emphasis on the word "thy." "All thy breakers . . ." The NAS does not translate it. "Thy breakers and thy billows have passed over me. I have been expelled from thy sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward thy holy temple." He is definitely focusing his attention on the Lord. Sometimes we have to "hit bottom" before we realize that the true source of strength and success is found in Jehovah.

"I have been expelled from Thy sight." Jonah realized the most horrible thing that can happen to a man is to be cast from God's sight. The fact that Jonah was alive in the belly of the fish assured him that he would again look toward the holy temple. Remember that the temple was associated with the presence of the God. Jonah is basically saying, "I know that I will be in Your presence again."

2:5 "Water encompassed me to the very soul . . ." meaning to the point of death. Later translations of the NAS have ". . . to the point of death . . ." however, it is footnoted "soul." No doubt there was lots of water in the belly of the fish, as well as the fact that he was in the water before he was swallowed by the fish.

"Weeds were wrapped around my head." There are weeds all over, he lacked air, experienced water pressure, endured total, absolute darkness. It was an incredible situation.

2:6 "The earth with its bars was around me forever . . ." Unless God removes them they are around him forever. These bars are like a city's bars when the gates are closed.

". . . Thou hast brought up my life from the pit . . ." It seems as if Jonah realized God has further use for him despite what he has done.

"Pit" = extreme ends.

2:7 “While I was fainting away . . .” Jonah seems to be at the point of death; perhaps he experiences shortness of breath, he is starting to get dizzy and is faint. His last thoughts are on the Lord, and he prays.

2:8-9 Jonah realized the emptiness and impotency of idolatry. They are worshiping an idol and they do not have any idea how powerful the true God really is.

“Vain . . .” a vapor, a breath, empty, void, worthless, useless.

“But I will sacrifice to Thee . . .” What a change in Jonah’s attitude! Before he was not willing to give anything to God, now he is willing to sacrifice.

“Salvation is from the Lord.” Jonah had learned how true that statement is. As a prophet of God he was no doubt preaching that message all of the time, BUT JUST BECAUSE YOU PREACH SOMETHING DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU UNDERSTAND IT! It does not mean that you INTERNALIZE it. All preachers and teachers need to remember that.

2:10 “Then the Lord commanded the fish . . .” Notice the authority of God, He is, in fact, in total control of man and the fish.

CHAPTER 3

3:1-2 “. . . the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time . . .” A gracious God is giving the man a second chance. God comes to Jonah and says, “Arise, go to Nineveh . . .” He does not scold Jonah for his previous disobedience as men would.

Notice it is God’s message which is to be preached. Man can make no improvement on the message! “You go and you preach what I am going to tell you.”

3:3 “So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord.” Jonah is obedient at this point.

The key word “great” is here again and in verse 2.

“. . . a three day’s walk . . .” probably meaning that it would take three days for Jonah to cover the seven to eight miles across the city inside the walls.

3:4 “. . . one day’s walk . . .” Do not think this means that is all Jonah did, but it is introducing Jonah as he begins his work. As he begins to go through the city “. . . he cried out and said, ‘Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.’” Notice how simple and straight forward this message is. He just preaches an eight word sermon (five words in the Hebrew), but is it powerful! This message is like all the messages of doom that are preached by the prophets in that it is conditional upon the people’s failure to respond, as is going to be evidenced by the

way the people do respond and how God acknowledges their repentance. Jeremiah 18:7-10 (specifically verse 8) shows the conditionality of the prophet's message.

"Overthrown" The idea is of being destroyed from the very foundations. Compare Genesis 19:25 where the same word is used for Sodom and Gomorrah.

3:5 "Then the people believed in God (ELOHIM) . . ." The simple message of the prophet was accepted by the people. No fancy message, just the basic message and the people obeyed it.

"Believed" The same word is used in Genesis 15:6 of Abraham.

3:6 From greatness, wealth and power this king goes to the humility of sackcloth and ashes. The spirit of true repentance was with this king whom a lot of scholars think was Shalmeneser IV (782-773 B.C.). With the dates we have given it is possible. Asher-dan, Asher-nirari, Tiglath-pileser, Shalmeneser V, were all possibilities. But Shalmeneser IV was the one who dealt most directly with Judah during the reign of Jeroboam II when Jonah was working.

3:7 This is the type of "take-charge" leadership that is needed today! The king and people are lost and the king knows it. Elders today need to realize this and take strong leadership action. Do you have people in the congregation who are not living right? Then, take strong leadership action.

It was an established custom for livestock to suffer also in order to show total repentance.

3:8 ". . . and beast . . ." The word here is "beast of burden" which would most likely limit it to oxen, cows or horses. Notice how he uses the imperatives. Both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly and turn from their wicked ways. He is commanding the people to get their lives right with Him.

3:9 ". . . turn and relent . . ." Repentance is a turning of the mind and will.

3:10 ". . . then God relented . . ." The same Hebrew word that is in verse 9. "Who knows, God may turn and relent . . ." Verse 10 says that is exactly what He did (cf. Joel 2:13).

". . . God saw their works . . ." Proof of true repentance.

NOTE: This chapter shows the love and compassion of God. If man will turn from his wickedness God will be merciful. And God is ready to forgive. That is why the book of Jonah is such a great book to preach. When you talk about re-

penitance, you can preach this book and show people that God is going to be One who will change His mind about the wickedness that He intends to do. One wonders if any great city today would respond that way. Would whole nations respond to God's message today as they did in ancient times? The answer to that question would probably depend on the nation's leadership. But notice that the people responded first, ". . . they called a fast and put on sackcloth . . ." (v. 5). Also notice that no one was excluded from the greatest to the least.

CHAPTER 4

- 4:1** "But it greatly displeased Jonah . . ." The repentance of the people upsets Jonah.
- 4:2** ". . . One who relents concerning calamity." As amazing as it sounds, Jonah really did not want these people to repent. He did not want God to forgive. That does not seem so incredible when we think about these people who, all of their lives have brutalized, manipulated and done everything they could possibly do to make life completely miserable for someone else, repent. It is sometimes hard for us to understand that God saves people when they repent late in life.
- 4:3** Jonah would rather die than see the city spared. He wanted Nineveh's destruction, not her repentance, to be Israel's example.
- 4:4** God wanted Jonah to think. "Do you really think that you have the basis on which to be angry?"
- 4:5** Jonah is demonstrating perfectly the feelings of the Hebrew people. Jehovah was their God! He was not to be shared with anyone else. If He was going to bless a people, the only people He should bless would be the Israelites and no one else. Jonah does not want them to receive a blessing from God and receive this forgiveness. He would love to find himself a nice spot outside the city and watch their destruction.
- 4:6** This word "appointed," (MANAH - "prepared" ASV) occurs four times in this book (cf. 1:17; 4:6,7,8). The repetition of this shows that God is in complete control over the events taking place in this book. Notice that the events are both good and bad. He "appoints" a great fish which is good because it swallows Jonah and keeps him alive. He "appoints" a plant which is good because it provides shade and comfort for Jonah. He also "appoints" two "bad" things. He "appoints" a worm and a scorching east wind. But all of the "appointments" are, ultimately, meant to be good in the preparation and formation of the character of Jonah. He commands the fish, the plant, the sea, the man. God is in absolute control of everything.

Notice the contrast in the text. ". . . Jonah was extremely happy about the plant" rather than being happy about the repenting city. He has everything mixed up in

his priorities. The text does not say he is simply happy. It says he is “. . . ex-tremely (GADOL) happy . . .” This illustrates Jonah has a problem with selfishness. He seems to be interested in himself and not in others.

4:7-8 “Death is better to me than life” (cf. 4:3).

4:9 This verse perfectly illustrates Jonah’s self-centered attitude. He thinks he has a basis for being upset.

4:10-11 These verses show the contrast between the way man thinks and the way God thinks. Man becomes greatly concerned over, and serves, that which directly affects him. The contrast: when that which may be of infinitely greater value is present before man, he can be indifferent to it.

“. . . more than 120,000 persons . . .” Nineveh grew to 600,000 population. There are some scholars who have wondered if this 120,000 persons could be referring to just “children.” If so, this could be a way of underscoring the “hardness” of Jonah’s heart. “. . . should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 . . .” *children* there? And the word “ADAM” would allow for it to be translated “children.” You could see how that would be making a completely different point than merely giving the total population of the city. The idea of “children” comes from the last part of the verse “. . . who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?” What do “animals” have to do with it? What a needless slaughter and destruction of children and animals (cf. Deut 1:39)!

Jonah was, basically, concerned about the “immediate.” God is concerned over the “things that last;” the souls of the people.

HOSEA

NAME: Hosea

MEANING: Salvation

DATE: 750 B.C.

AUDIENCE: Israel

THEME: God is Love

SPECIAL NOTE: The only writing prophet of the Northern Kingdom.

OUTLINE:

- I. Israel's Adultery.....Ch 1-3
- II. Israel's Ungodliness & Inevitable PunishmentCh 4-13
- III. Israel's Conversion & Pardon.....Ch 14

LESSONS:

Without the knowledge of Jehovah and His law there can be no fellowship with God (1 Jn 1:5-7).

The sacredness and the sanctity of the marriage relationship.

Sin destroys the nerve which enables men to make moral decisions.

Inward corruption is more dangerous to a nation's existence than external enemies.

The root sin from which all others spring is unfaithfulness to God.

HOSEA INTRODUCTION

I. NAME.

“Hosea” means “Salvation” or “Deliverance.” It is the counterpart to the Greek, “Jesus,” or “Joshua.” “Joshua” and “Hosea” are very similar to one another in the Hebrew. The text says he was the son of Beerli (v. 1) of whom we know nothing. Hosea preached in the Northern Kingdom as Jonah did. Hosea prophesied during the time of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.

II. DATE.

About 750 B.C. His ministry, if it went through all of these kings, lasted 60-80 years. Hosea is contemporary with Isaiah. And since he prophesied during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, Hosea probably witnessed the Assyrian captivity of Israel.

III. INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BOOK OF HOSEA (Especially chapters 1,2,3):

Basically, there are three main interpretations.

- A. ALLEGORICAL. No such marriage between Hosea and Gomer ever took place, but Hosea invented the parable to illustrate the concept of God’s love for sinful Israel – no true Hosea and Gomer.

Refutation: The entire passage reads as a historical narrative. Also, such an interpretation casts a negative reflection upon Hosea and his wife.

- B. LITERAL HISTORY #1. Hosea was commanded to marry an actual adulteress, so Hosea obeyed the Divine command.

Note: This instructor accepts this view based on the phrase “..take to yourself a wife of harlotry . . .” (1:2).

- C. LITERAL HISTORY #2. Gomer was actually a “clean” woman at the beginning. But later, after the marriage, goes after other lovers and becomes unfaithful. The reasons for this interpretation are:

1. They cannot see Hosea, a prophet of God, married to a harlot.

Their thinking is: “You are saying that Israel was unfaithful from the start, then God ‘married her’ and ‘she’ continued ‘her’ unfaithfulness.”

Refutation: When was it that Israel was faithful and then became unfaithful? The nation of Israel, from the start, was a rebellious, disobedient people. There was never a time they started out “clean” and “faithful.”

2. Some try to make an argument on the Hebrew word used here for “harlot.”

Their thinking is: The word used means, “a woman with inclination toward harlotry.” The major argument they make is that it does not fit the parallel. It is obvious in the story that Gomer represents “Israel” and Hosea represents “God.” They would say, “Are you saying God would take for His “wife,” or His people, someone who was already a harlot? God would not do that. Israel was faithful but then became unfaithful.”

Refutation: Was Israel faithful when God chose them as His people? Were they faithful when God led them out of Egypt? Before they received the Law they were committing idolatry. This narrative is historical! The prophet really did marry this woman and they really did have these children. They really did name these children these things. All of this is part of Hosea’s ministry.

What is happening in his life is a reflection of what is happening in the world with God and His people. So it has a parallel, but it is told in such a way that Hosea is living what he is preaching. He is living the pain of being married to a woman who is unfaithful. He tries to relate the pain God feels when Israel became unfaithful to Him. It is a powerful illustration!

There is a different word for “harlot” and both words seem to be used interchangeably. “They” are trying to make the point that this word is the word that means “inclined toward,” not necessarily that you are one. Brown, Driver and Briggs and other Hebrew scholars do not accept this meaning at all.

NOTES: Interestingly enough, “harlot” is a word based on the Hebrew word GADOSH (“holy,” “one set apart”), but that is not the word used here.

This instructor’s view is that Gomer was a harlot before Hosea married her.

The expression “. . . children of harlotry . . .” does not have to mean they were born from a relationship that was adulterous. There is no indication they were not Gomer and Hosea’s children, but she was still a harlot when Hosea took her

as a wife. So their children are called “. . . children of harlotry . . .” This is not meant to be an indictment against the children in that they were not Hosea’s children.

IV. BACKGROUND.

Hosea was a writing prophet of the Northern Kingdom. His prophecies overlapped those of Amos, Isaiah and Micah. This was an age of religious apostasy. Instead of putting their trust in God, the leaders of the Northern Kingdom sought the favor, or by bribery tried to buy the favor, of Assyria and Egypt. It was evident that their faith was in the world not in Jehovah.

This book is one of the greatest love stories in the Bible. The prophet, through the heartbreak of his own marriage, came to see Israel’s sin against God in its deepest and most awful significance.

Hosea loved Gomer with a pure, deep, tender, sensitive love. She was unfaithful to him and this caused him great sorrow, yet also brought about great compassion on his part. We see the redeeming, chastening and restoring (3:3) that takes place between them.

Hosea, through his own experience, came to see the true meaning of Israel’s sin; it was SPIRITUAL ADULTERY! He saw sin in its ugliest moments. He came to understand that “sin not merely breaks God’s law, but breaks his heart.” Human sin hurts God!!!

V. THE TEACHING OF THE BOOK.

The picture of the true nature of God:

- A. God is great and unceasing lover.
- B. God is a great sufferer who has found His love unrequited.

The picture of the true nature of sin:

- A. Sin in the final analysis is unfaithfulness, infidelity and whoredom (ch 1-3).
- B. Sin ages one and destroys his youthful spirit. The decay is gradual, imperceptible, but dangerous and fatal (5:12; 7:9).
- C. Sin is contagious and one who exposes himself to the atmosphere and presence of those who are evil will destroy you (4:9; 1 Cor 15:33).

- D. Sin robs people of the power to make moral distinctions (4:11). The optic nerve has been severed by gazing too long and too longingly at immorality.

The picture of true repentance:

- A. To Hosea repentance is no mere change in the direction of one's life.
- B. Study these: Hosea 3:5, 5:4; 6:1; 14:1-2.

VI. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL.

We see the whole Bible story in the book of Hosea:

- A. SIN - willful disobedience of man to the word and will of God.
- B. JUDGMENT - paradise lost; "sown wind . . . reap whirlwind" (8:7).
- C. LOVE - The love of God and the victory He offers.

Social conditions Hosea faced:

- A. A great laxness and looseness in personal behavior.
- B. The leaders set poor examples (7:3-5).
- C. The courts were corrupt. The judges made their living from bribes and excessive fees.
- D. Family life has gone to pieces. Authority in the home was not respected. The sacredness of the marriage vow had been lost.
- E. Drunkenness, with all of its evils, was fast destroying home life and the minds of the people.
- F. Concentration of wealth was in the hands of a few and this leads to the oppression of the poor.

Religious conditions Hosea faced:

- A. Sin ruled and reigned in the hearts of the people.
- B. Priests taught the opposite of what the people needed. They encouraged worship that was contrary to the will of God. They welcomed the spread

of any impiety that would bring them material gain (4:8; 5:1). The priests made sin attractive.

- C. Worship was arranged in a formal and professional way (1 Kgs 12:25ff.). No real demands were placed on the people.
- D. They lived lives with no morals and then went to worship God in reckless abandon. In their religious practices they kept the name of God but took over the ritual and practices of Baal worship.
- E. Any thought of purity and spiritual living was out of the question.

Family conditions Hosea faced:

- A. The union was ruined by his wife's unfaithfulness. The word "whoredom" is used 18 times and the word "lovingkindness" is used 37 times.
- B. The family:
 - 1. Hosea - stands for Jehovah.
 - 2. Gomer - stands for Israel.
 - 3. Jezreel - "God Scatters;" "God Sows." It means judgment on evil doers. It was the name of a plain in the Northern Kingdom known for its beauty but it became a battlefield.
 - 4. Lo-ruhamah - "Not Pitied," or "Unloved." The name implied extreme desolateness of condition. A relationship ruptured by rebellion.
 - 5. Lo-Ammi - "Not My People;" "No Kin Of Mine." God could no longer claim them as His own. The inevitable result of the rejection of God.

Hosea and the New Testament:

- A. "Not my people" - Hosea 1:10; 2:23 compared with Romans 9:25-26 and 1 Peter 2:10.
- B. "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" - Hosea 6:6 compared with Matthew 9:13; 12:7 and Mark 12:33.
- C. "Out of Egypt I have called my son" - Hosea 11:1 compared with Exodus 4:22f. and Matthew 2:15.

- D. "Fall on us" - Hosea 10:8 compared with Luke 23:30 and Revelation 6:16; 9:6.
- E. "Death . . . grave . . . victory" - Hosea 13:14 compared with 1 Corinthians 15:55.

Israel's blacklist of sins

- A. Falsehood 4:1
- B. Licentiousness 4:11
- C. Murder 5:2
- D. Robbery 7:1
- E. Oppression 12:7

God's figures for the sinner in Hosea:

- A. An adulterous wife 3:3
- B. A wine - inflamed drunkard 4:11
- C. A backsliding heifer 4:16
- D. As troops of robbers..... 6:9
- E. Hot as an oven..... 7:7
- F. A cake not turned (half-baked)..... 7:8
- G. Like a silly dove..... 7:11
- H. Like a deceitful bow 7:16
- I. Swallowed up..... 8:8
- J. A vessel wherein is no delight..... 8:8
- K. A wild ass..... 8:9

What Israel lacked:

- A. Lack of knowledge 4:1,2,6; 6:3,6; 8:12
- B. Lack of trust in God..... 5:13; 7:11; 8:5; 11:5-7
- C. Lack of leadership.....4:4-6; 6:8-9; 7:5-7
- D. Lack of love for God.....Chs 1-3; 11:1-4

God calls for a return to Him:

- A. God's choice 11:1
- B. Our choice 11:2 (cf. 2 Pet 2:21)
- C. The grace of God11:4 (cf. Jn 12:32; Jn 14:1-4)

HOSEA EXPOSITION

CHAPTER 1

1:1 The book begins like all of the prophetic books, “The word of the Lord . . .” The prophets established that their message was from God, their message is the word of God.

1:2-3 “. . . took Gomer . . . and she conceived . . .” It seems apparent she conceived after Hosea took her to be his wife.

“. . . a wife of harlotry . . .” Notice:

- a. To obey a command of God is not sin.
- b. To marry an unchaste woman was not sin in the Old Testament.
- c. The only exceptions to #B were the priests (cf. Lev 21:7).

1:4 “Jezreel” means “God sows or scatters.” This word is used for when a farmer takes seed and scatters or sows it.

“. . . I will punish the house of Jehu . . .” (cf. 2 Kgs 10). Jehu was doing the will of the Lord, he was motivated by selfishness and caused needless bloodshed.

“. . . I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.” If Hosea prophesied in 750 B.C., we are looking at a period of 28 years because Israel was taken captive in 722 B.C. (cf. 2 Kgs 10:11; 15:10,12).

1:5 “And it will come about on that day . . .” “That day” being the end of Israel (722 B.C.).

“. . . I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.” Scholars have asked about this last phrase, “Was the final stand of the armies of Israel in the valley of Jezreel?” That would be a logical place for them to have their last stand in resistance to the Assyrians because it was close to the capital of Samaria.

1:6 LO-RUHAMA, “No Compassion” or “No Pity.”

“. . . I will no longer have compassion . . .” Notice how he is using the name LO-RUHAMA (No Compassion). Because of what they have done, God is no longer going to issue a reprieve.

1:7 “. . . and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horseman” (cf. 2 Kgs 19:35; Isa 37:36). This event took place about 722 B.C.

1:8 In view of the wording of this verse and from the perspective of Hosea and Gomer, what do you think might have transpired here with this child? “Not my child,” Lo- ammi is the child of someone else, therefore this has a definite parallel between God, Israel, Hosea and Gomer.

1:9 LO-AMMI, “Not My People.”

This has to be one of the saddest verses in the Old Testament. God is saying to Israel, “You are no longer My people; I am no longer your God.” God could no longer claim them as His own. He could no longer be their God. They were a rejected people.

1:10 This type of passage does not mean much to Israel at this time, but it will be one of hope when they are in captivity. “Better days are coming.” There is a time when God is going to bring the people back together again. The New Testament applies this to the church (cf. Rom 9:25-28; 1 Pet 2:10).

1:11 “. . . sons of Judah . . . sons of Israel . . . gathered together . . .” Notice how He unites them.

“. . . one leader . . .” As you look at 3:5, obviously this occurs hundreds of years after David has died, but the Jews refer to the Messiah in terms of King David. This is most likely the closest this book is going to get to being Messianic. They are going to seek the Lord their God and David their king? David is already long gone, how can they do that? That is the way they would usually refer to the Messiah, “David their king.” The Messiah was going to be a king like David. Ezekiel 34:24 is another passage using “David” in the same sense, and he writes later than Hosea.

Scholarship looks at the “. . . one leader . . .” as being that which could be fulfilled in ways other than being just Christ. For example: In Ezra/Nehemiah we find there was, basically, one person who was leading the people back to the land. Zerubbabel, Ezra and then Nehemiah. Each time there is one man, “one leader,” who brings the people back to the land, it could be referring to that, and then have its ultimate realization in Christ.

Notice the contrast here. Three children are born. “Jezreel” means “Scattered.” But this says, “. . . sons of Judah . . . sons of Israel . . . gathered together . . .” So, God is offering hope in contrast to the children. The second child is LO-RUHAMA (No Compassion), but God is going to have “mercy.” “Mercy” is evident from verses 10, 11 even though the word is not used until 2:1 (RUHA-MAH). The above concept may be diagramed in the following manner:

“JEZREEL”	-	“Scattering”	-	“Gathering”
“LO-RUHAMA”	-	“No Mercy”	-	“Give Mercy”
“LO-AMMI”	-	“Not My People”	-	“Will Be His People” (vv. 1:10-2:1)

A good passage to compare with this section is 1 Peter 2:10. This whole section has Jehovah speaking about what Hosea is experiencing with an unfaithful wife. Jehovah has experienced an unfaithful nation. Because of that He is going to send the nation away. But, being a loving and compassionate God, He is going to bring the nation back.

CHAPTER 2

2:1 This verse really belongs with the last chapter.

“Ammi . . . Ruhamah.” These two represent the faithful remnant.

2:2 “Her face . . .” Remove the harlot’s makeup.

2:3 “Lest I strip her naked . . .” Jehovah is going to strip her of all that He has given her. Just like Hosea is going to take everything he has given to his wife, God is going to take away all that He has given to His people, unless she puts away her harlotry.

“I will also make her like a wilderness . . .” When God takes away blessings from His people there is only one result which could possibly happen. That is devastation and desolation. People are left alone, not able to survive without God.

2:4 The remnant must also go into captivity “. . . because they are children of harlotry.” In this narrative it seems as if two of Gomer’s children were not born with Hosea being their father.

2:5 “For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers . . .’” Notice the active attitude. She is very active in these idolatries. She is just not having men who are seeking her out, but she is seeking them out.

“. . . who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.” These are Gomer’s words. It is almost as if Hosea had said, “Gomer, if you do not stop being unfaithful, you are going to be put away, my home and care will no longer be yours. You are not going to get any more food and clothing from me. Whatever I have given you I am going to take back and you will be stripped naked and out on your own.” She is saying, “I’ll go after my lovers. They will give me bread and water. My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.”

Her attitude is, “I do not need you, I have all of these people who will take care of me.” So what is the parallel of that with Israel? They are saying, “We can go after other gods and we do not need you.”

2:6 “. . . with thorns . . .” intense suffering in captivity.

“. . . I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths.” God is going to make it very difficult for Israel to be successful.

2:7 “. . . she will seek them, but not find them . . .” The reason Israel will seek their lovers but not find them is because they never really existed. They were not “true gods” who could do anything. The “lovers” were not “true lovers.” How many times have you heard of someone who is just looking for a little pleasure. He does not want any “strings” attached, he is wanting to have a little fun for a night or for an hour. That is what Gomer is going to find. She goes to find these lovers and she is going to say, “Give me bread and water. Give me a place to stay.” And these men are going to answer, “I do not want to have anything to do with all of that. I am not prepared for that type of obligation.” Israel is going to go to the Baalim (the “gods”) and they are not going to find them. They never really existed. The “gods” are not going to be able to help.

“. . . I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now.” This is what discipline is all about. They realize that what they had with God is as good as it can ever be.

NOTE: This is the purpose of disfellowshipping. We take away one’s blessings of the fellowship and all of the good things that go along with being a member of the Lord’s church. Then they see things in proper perspective. When they are away they really think, “You know, I had it pretty good back then.” That is the purpose of disfellowshipping. Think how this is amplified if you are sent back into the world? All indications are that Gomer wanted to stay in the marriage. Hosea is saying, “I am not going to tolerate this unfaithfulness.” She was wanting the best of both worlds (sin and security). Which is exactly what happens in the church today. People want to live in the world, and they want to have the church, fellowship, security and the shelter.

Think about it from the perspective of a person with an unfaithful mate. How many times have you heard about a situation in which the unfaithful mate does not really appreciate the good things of their first mate until it is too late? “The grass is always greener on the other side,” right? They decide, “I am going to get out of this marriage.” Then they find out their second mate does not compare at all favorably to their first one. The relationship that they had and everything that was going on in that first marriage was a whole lot better than what they have right now. That is what Gomer is saying, and that is what Israel is going to say. “. . . I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now!”

Israel's captors will destroy her idols and she learns they are useless.

2:8 "For she does not know . . ." Speaking of Israel and Gomer.

". . . that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil . . ." A lot of times, we, like Israel, fail to thank God for daily blessings. Like the song says, "Count your many blessings; name them one by one . . ." that is a good practice preachers need to apply to themselves because they tend to think that their blessings are few. They go through life not having their eyes open to all of the positives that happen.

". . . which they used for Baal." Baal was considered the "god" of these things. That is why they were using these things for Baal. They consider him the source of the wine, the oil, the silver and the gold. Therefore, when they were blessed with those things they needed to go and make offerings to Baal. Jehovah's blessings given to a false god!!

2:9 "Therefore, I will take back My grain . . ." Notice how He says, "My." It is not Baal's, it is Mine! ". . . I will take back My grain at harvest time and My new wine in its season. I will also take away My wool and My flax . . ." God is going to take it all back. A good title for this verse is: "The Consequences of Being an Ingrate." If we allow ourselves to slide into an attitude of ingratitude, then God will take away that which He has given; that for which we should have been thankful.

2:10 God was active in blessing, now He is active in punishing.

". . . lewdness . . ." inwardly she was full of sin and shame.

". . . her lovers . . ." her foreign alliances.

2:11 Prophetically speaking, when Israel is carried off into captivity "Her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths," which were a part of the Law, will no longer be done. Now they are only the outward appearance of true worship.

2:12 They were praying to the "gods," and specifically Baal, for the blessings that Jehovah had given them, and He was not going to tolerate it anymore. He is going to take them away. Again, the idea of their being ungrateful.

2:13 ". . . when she used to offer sacrifices to them . . ." She failed to see who it was who blessed her, so she is praising the wrong ones. How many times has God providentially involved Himself in helping us? And yet we are like the nine leprous men, who do not come back to say "thank you" to God.

". . . so that she forgot Me . . ." Her sins were really two-fold:

- a. Forgetting Jehovah, and
- b. Worshiping the Baalim (plural word).

2:14 Notice Israel is not asking to come back, just as Gomer is not asking to come back. He actively goes after her. What love is demonstrated by this? Whenever the faithful mate accepts back the unfaithful mate, it takes a great deal of love, mercy and compassion. It is almost an indescribable love that must be there for one to do this. If someone had forsaken you, had given their love to someone else, had given their bodies to someone else, it would be extremely difficult for you to be able to take that person back, knowing that their body had been used for the pleasure of someone else. But here Hosea is being used as an illustration of the active love God has for His people.

2:15-16 “Achor” means “Trouble.” “Ishi” means “My Husband.” “Baali” means “My Master.”

“. . . in that day . . .” the time of Christ’s church.

“. . . will no longer call Me Baali . . .” Israel never goes back to idolatry after the captivity!

2:17 “. . . so that they will be mentioned by their names no more.” Remember how He said that she was no longer saying those things to Baal.

2:18 “. . . in that day . . .” a prophet’s way of predicting the Messianic kingdom (cf. Isa 2:1-4; 9:1-7; 11:1-10; 35:8-10; Ezek 34:20-31; Mic 4:1-4; Zech 9:9-10).

“. . . I will also make a covenant for them . . .” There are lots of marriage overtones here. The idea is of a covenant and the marriage covenant is broken. God is going to make a new covenant with them. This is going to be a covenant which brings complete peace and harmony.

2:19-20 Obvious marriage language in verse 19. There are five things He says He is going to betroth them in:

- a. Righteousness,
- b. Justice,
- c. Lovingkindness,
- d. Compassion and

e. Faithfulness.

These are key elements in a successful marriage. In the marriage relationship you must have:

Righteousness. The foundation begins with a relationship with God.

Justice. A fairness, fair treatment of one another.

Lovingkindness. This is really two verbs put together. "Loving" and "kind." You can think you love a person but not necessarily be "kind" to them. Love and kindness go together.

Compassion. Compassion in the sense that you "feel" for that person. You realize that he does have faults and weaknesses, but yet your love continues to reach out to him.

Faithfulness. A commitment to one another. A dedication to one another where there is no commitment or faithfulness to anyone else.

"Then you will know the Lord." You will not ever fully know your mate until you have those five "pillars" supporting your marriage. You will never really know your mate like God intends for you to know her. So it is with God. If there is no righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, compassion or faithfulness you will never know the Lord either.

It is interesting to notice this is a veiled reference to the sexual act. The Hebrew word YADA means "know." This is the word used in Genesis 4:1. "And Adam knew his wife . . ." What does that mean? He had sex with her. Why does the Hebrew use the word "know, to know something" and equate it with sexual intercourse? Because, in sexual intercourse all barriers are broken down. Two people completely expose themselves to one another and give themselves to one another in a very intimate act. Intimacy breeds knowledge. You "know" each other. You "know" more about each other. You "know" things about each other no one else knows, because you have seen each other with your clothes off and you have done something with each other that no one else has done with you or with her.

So it says here, "Then you will 'know' the Lord." An intimate relationship with God is based upon those five "pillars." It is not a sexual act or anything sexual when we are talking about God. It is used in a spiritual context. You are going to have an intimate relationship with the Lord.

God will shower the church with all of His blessings (cf. Eph 1:3).

2:21 Notice how many times the word “respond” (answer - ASV) occurs. It is used three times in verse 21, twice in verse 22. When we treat our mates in a certain way, they respond in a characteristic way. That is the way it is going to be with God. “And it will come about in that day that I will respond,’ declares the Lord.” The intimate relationship is going to find a God who responds to the affection given Him. You love God and He is going to respond to that love.

“I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth . . .” In other words, we will talk to the clouds, and the clouds will water the earth.

2:22 “And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and the oil . . .” When you begin being affectionate, loving and compassionate with your wife, then she will respond. It will set in motion a number of other good things that will take place.

It also works that way in your relationship with God. You respond with affection with God, then good things happen.

2:23 “. . . I will sow her for Myself in the land.” This is a play on words in the Hebrew. Remember, “Jezreel” means “God sows” or “He sows.” The last part of verse 22. “And they will respond to Jezreel. And I will sow her for Myself in the land.”

Notice the repetition of the word “compassion.” What God is saying is, “I will have RUHAMAH on her who had LO-RUHAMA.”

Paul quotes this verse in Romans 9:25. He uses it in a Messianic context. Peter also has reference to it in 1 Peter 2:10. Therefore, there can be no doubt this prophecy was fulfilled.

CHAPTER 3

3:1 “Go again, love a woman . . .” Gomer is that woman (see margin), in other words, “Go back to Gomer.”

“. . . raisin cakes . . .” are what they believed they would receive as reward for worshiping Baal. Baal was a “god” of vegetation. When the fields were productive, they considered it as a gift to Baal. They offered these raisin cakes. There was an idolatrous connection with these cakes. They are mentioned in other places in the scriptures (cf. 2 Sam 6:19). Most commentaries will give a good background on that.

3:2 “. . . fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley.” In Exodus 21:32 thirty shekels of silver was the price for a wounded slave. Hosea is paying half of that price which shows how broken and torn Gomer must have been. Zechariah, in his prophecy, talks about thirty pieces of silver. That was what Judas betrayed

Jesus for. Judas was selling Jesus very cheaply. Hosea is apparently buying her from a slave block (cf. Zech 11:12; Mt 26:15).

- 3:3** “. . . nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you . . .” Hosea is telling Gomer there will be no sexual relations, no living together as man and wife for awhile.

NOTE: This woman has to be Gomer or the analogy with God and Israel breaks down. If it were another woman it would almost have to be God and another nation. This is pointed out because some question whether this is Gomer, but it has to be her, otherwise it does not make sense.

- 3:4** There is a time for reestablishing their relationship. They will not live together as man and wife “. . . for many days . . .”

“. . . without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar . . .” All of this is referring to the time of captivity. Hosea and Gomer are living separately, no longer as man and wife, illustrating the fact that God and Israel are no longer together as “man and wife.”

“. . . sacrifice . . . ephod . . .” represents true worship.

“. . . sacred pillar . . . household idols . . .” represents false worship.

- 3:5** “. . . seek the Lord their God and David their king . . .” This is a Jewish way of referring to Christ. This finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus (cf. 2:16-17).

CHAPTER 4

- 4:1** As in a marriage, so also in a relationship with God, you must have these fundamental elements. There has to be “faithfulness,” there has to be “kindness,” there has to be “knowledge” of each other. The word for “kindness” (“goodness,” ASV) might better have been translated “loyalty.” It is a different Hebrew word from the one for “lovingkindness.” Thinking of the marriage relationship context, “loyalty” would probably have been the most appropriate translation.

“. . . there is no faithfulness . . .” no loyalty, no “. . . knowledge of God in the land . . .” The word “knowledge” or “know” is one of the key words in the book of Hosea (cf. 2:8,20). “Knowledge” is one of their problems. What they are doing is illustrated very clearly in verse 2.

Truth, mercy and knowledge cannot be separated (cf. Rom 1:20; Heb 11:6; Jas 1:17).

- 4:2** In this first line they break five of the ten commandments.

“Swearing”	breaks	Commandment #3
“Deception”	breaks	Commandment #9
“Murder”	breaks	Commandment #6
“Stealing”	breaks	Commandment #8
“Adultery”	breaks	Commandment #7

“They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed.” This is breaking the second greatest commandment, according to Jesus, “Love your neighbor as yourself . . .” When a person employs violence it breeds further bloodshed and violence as opposed to 2:21 when people respond to God, and God responds in turn with love and compassion. When a person employs violence, violence will be returned (cf. Judg 21:25).

4:3 This is a desolation so widespread it is going to effect everything. The land is mourning and suffering because of the sins of the people.

Break any physical or spiritual law and punishment will come!

4:4 This verse is a sermon within itself. It is too late to reason with the people. They are too far gone to listen now. “Yet let no one find fault and let none offer reproof . . .” He is saying this because it is not going to do any good at this point.

“. . . your people are like those who contend with the priest.” It is not intelligent to argue with the experts on the Law. But these people did not care. They were just arguing with whomever. They are saying, “The Priest made me do it” (cf. Deut 17:8-13).

4:5 “So you will stumble by day . . .” Usually a person stumbles by night, but they are so “blind” they are going to “. . . stumble by day . . .” “And the prophet also will stumble with you by night . . .” Here an indictment is issued on the prophet who has been instrumental in leading the people astray.

“. . . and I will destroy your mother.” This is talking about the nation of Israel (cf. 2:2,5). In these verses Gomer is being referred to as the “mother.” And she represents “Israel” in the parallel (cf. Lk 6:39).

4:6 “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Hosea states that these people are going to be destroyed because they do not “know” enough (cf. 4:1). It must be recognized that their “lack of knowledge” is their own fault.

“Since you have forgotten the law of your God . . .” Hosea places the blame on the priests. They had the responsibility to teach the people about God, but they had failed. He is talking generically in 6b, “. . . I also reject you from being My priest . . .” “I will reject you priests from being Mine.” How ridiculous is it for a priest to forget the Law of God? But that is exactly what these priests had done (cf. Ex 19:5-6; 2 Thess 2:10-12).

- 4:7** There is some discussion as to whether the “they” might be the children or the priests. It is probably talking about the priests. “The more they (priests) multiplied the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame.” The books of Exodus and Leviticus describe the glories of being a priest. God is going to turn their glory into shame. In Leviticus 10:1-3 Nadab and Abihu had offered strange fire to the Lord. Moses responds to Aaron, “By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy before all the people I will be honored.” The word for “honored” is translated “glorified” in some translations. Nadab and Abihu were glorifying, honoring themselves (cf. 1 Sam 2:30; Phil 3:19).
- 4:8** “They feed on the sin of My people . . .” The more the people sinned, the more sacrifices they had to offer. The priests loved it when the people were sinning because that meant they were going to make more money and have more food.
- 4:9** “. . . like people, like priest . . .” A little biblical phrase. Or, “As the preacher goes, so goes the congregation.”
- 4:10-18** Note how many times the words “harlot” and “adultery” occur. This underscores the fact that these people have prostituted themselves with the Baals.

Normally a woman does not become a harlot because she enjoys it. She becomes a harlot because she needs the support. Notice “. . . they will play the harlot, but not increase . . .” So here they are worshiping these “gods” but are not getting anything for it. Just like a woman being a prostitute and never getting paid.

- 4:10** “. . . because they have stopped giving heed to the Lord.” The priests’ problem is not only ignorance (v. 6), but willful indifference. That will spell doom for them (cf. Eccl 12:13-14).

God will not force His blessings on anyone.

- 4:11** These things “. . . take away the understanding . . .” They do not know what is going on. Literally, the word for “understanding” is “heart.” They are taking away the “heart.” A person’s “heart” does not stay where it needs to stay. All the money that is to be made, plus the fringe benefits, such as wine and new wine, take away the “heart.” You can tear the “heart” right out of a marriage by being unfaithful.

Men with these traits should never be allowed to lead any nation!

- 4:12** “My people consult their wooden idol [stock, ASV] (Baal) and their diviner’s wand (staff, ASV) informs them . . .” The best that we can tell about this “wand” or “rod” is that they would have a circle drawn. Then they would have various answers written within the circle. The “rod” would be held upright. Then they dropped it. Which ever direction it would point after it fell would be the answer.

The “spirit of harlotry” = the “spirit of anarchy.”

- 4:13** Everybody is involved and every place you go you are going to find these idolatrous practices. Notice what he says in verse 14.

Idolatry had both male and female prostitutes.

- 4:14** God is saying that the daughters and the brides will not be punished to the degree that the fathers and men are going to be punished. The men are most directly responsible for this abomination. They are partially responsible for their brides committing adultery and playing the harlot. All of this context is talking about ignorance (v. 1). The fact is they are doing something and they really do not know what they are doing. People have done many stupid things because they did not understand. It is like what Jesus said on the cross, “Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing.” The people were crucifying the Son of God and had no idea what they were doing (cf. Rom 1:28; 2:3).

- 4:15-19** This is a note to Judah.

- 4:15** Hosea’s prophecy is a warning to Israel not to be a bad influence to their brothers to the south. The people in Judah were more inclined to worship the Lord. He is saying, “Do not go around saying, ‘As the Lord lives.’ I’d rather you not even involve Me at all because you are giving the wrong impression.” It is like denominationalism today. Denominationalism uses the names of God and Jesus, and they talk about the authority of the Bible, but they have mangled the text so much and have twisted “pure and undefiled religion” so much that people get the wrong impression of what is going on.

In 5:5,10,14 you will see they did not heed the warning. Judah ended up falling as well. Judah was influenced by the evil of Israel.

- 4:16** He is saying, “It is too late now to do anything good. The heifer is already stubborn.”

- 4:17** This is not meant to be construed as, “I do not care anymore. Just let it alone. I do not care.” It is to be understood that they have gone beyond God’s limits.

They are beyond hope. They are “joined” to idols. They are inseparably tied to those idols, now.

4:18 This shows how ridiculous that is. It does not make any difference if the “. . . liquor (is) gone . . .” they still are going to keep playing the harlot.

“. . . dearly love shame . . .” They love the sin that brings shame, therefore they love shame. Jewish English Bible - “Her rulers deeply love dishonor.”

4:19 “The wind wraps them in its wings . . .” and carries them off to a foreign land (cf. 12:1). This is talking about going after Assyria.

NOTE: In Hosea’s talking about harlotry and being adulterers, etc., understand that he is not talking about sexual unfaithfulness, but about idolatry. Also understand though, that part of that idolatry was with the temple prostitutes. There was a sexual sin tied into this. When he says, “I will not punish your daughters when they play the harlot or your brides when they commit adultery . . .” they were literally doing that, but it was in an idolatrous context.

CHAPTER 5

NOTE: In this chapter God begins His indictment of the priests and others as well.

5:1-2 “. . . for the judgment applies to you . . .” “Listen,” because this judgment applies to you. It is like a preacher today saying, “You people need to ‘listen’ because when God says, ‘Those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God’ (as Paul does in Gal 5:20ff), this judgment applies to you.”

“. . . Mizpah . . . Tabor . . .” Mizpah is east and Tabor is west of Jordan, therefore this equals all of Israel.

“And the revoltors have gone deep in depravity.” Better: “. . . profound to make slaughter . . .” (KJV). They have studied and gone to great care in order to see how sinful they could be.

5:3 Another thing that Hosea does is remind the people God knows all and sees all. What they are doing and what they have done has not gone unnoticed. The real tragedy though is in verse 4 (cf. Num 32:23).

5:4-6 Compare Isaiah 1:10-20.

5:4 “Their deeds will not allow them to return to their God.” They are so bad they can not come back. The reasons they cannot come back is given in 4c and 4d.

- a. A spirit of harlotry is within them. They are enjoying what they are doing so much, they just cannot stay away. They cannot say, “No!”
- b. They do not know the Lord. How can an alcoholic, who is genuinely addicted to alcohol, ever walk away from it? It is all part of education. “. . . for a spirit of harlotry is within them and they do not know the Lord.” They have a passion for the idolatry, and they do not know any better any more.

They do not know the consequences of what they are doing or how to get out of it.

NOTE: The book which places the highest premium on “knowledge” in the New Testament is 2 Peter.

5:5 Compare Jeremiah 14:7.

5:6 “They will go with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord . . .” Why would they be going to seek the Lord with flocks and herds? Sacrifices! But they are not going to find Him because He has withdrawn. This is after it is too late. You would think that once they were carried off into captivity, the Israelites would be more inclined to worship the Lord, but it is too late, even then.

They wanted to be saved “in” their sins, not “from” their sins!

5:7 “. . . for they have borne illegitimate children . . .” There have been children born as a result of their prostituting themselves in the pagan temples. Just as Hosea’s wife Gomer bore illegitimate children, the nation of Israel is becoming illegitimate.

“. . . devour . . .” This stands for destruction.

5:8 “. . . behind you, Benjamin!” A warning, “Lookout! He is coming from behind you.” This sounds like Joel saying, “Blow the trumpet. Warn the people of coming doom.” Hosea is using the same illustration. The horn and the trumpet are both meant to be warning sounds, alarms.

5:9 “. . . I declare what is sure . . .” God does not speak in “maybe’s.”

5:10 “. . . Who move a boundary . . .” Their land was divided by boundary markers. It was fairly easy to take down a boundary marker and move it outward so that you had more land. The idea may be Judah was thinking of all the land of Israel they could take when Israel was carried off. Rather than thinking about the consequences of why this is happening, they are thinking of how it is going to benefit them. They want to benefit from another’s misfortune, rather than ask the ques-

tion, “Why did this person have this misfortune?” Because of that, God is going to pour out His wrath upon them (cf. Deut 27:17).

5:11 “. . . he was determined to follow man’s command.” Once again, determination! It did not make any difference what else Ephraim was told or taught, they had decided to follow man’s will instead of God’s will.

5:12-13 “. . . then Ephraim went to Assyria . . .” This gives a good idea of the political maneuvering going on. When things were going poorly in the kingdom, the logical thing to do was to try to make alliances with foreign nations, and get them to help them when they had problems. What they should have done was to turn to God, because if they had truly been faithful, God would have been blessing them as He had promised He would.

“. . . King Jareb . . .” “Jareb” is a Hebrew word meaning “avenging” or “contending.” An avenging king. But this king is not going to “avenge” you. “. . . he is unable to heal you or cure you of your wound.” The NAS translators show “wound” could be translated “ulcer.” An “ulcer” is that which happens internally, normally caused by excessive worry. That would fit what he is saying. These people are worried about how they are going to get by. They go to the foreign nations to make alliances when their problem really is internal. The king is not going to be able to come down to heal your internal “sickness,” only God can do that (cf. Psa 39:11).

NOTE: The word used here is not the usual Hebrew word for an exterior injury, “ulcer” is the idea. It is an internal problem, not external like a scrape or injury on the skin.

5:14 “. . . there will be none to deliver.” God is saying, “I am going to be very complete and also brutal in the devastation of the land “. . . like a lion . . .”

5:15 It is going to happen so they “. . . acknowledge their guilt . . .” “. . . and seek My face . . .” Repentance is necessary if a man wants to be acceptable to God.

“. . . in their affliction . . .” Unfortunately, this is what is necessary. “Affliction” is what is going to make them earnestly seek God. Had they not been “afflicted,” they would not seek Him. Affliction has a way of getting people to turn their focus on God (cf. Ezek 11:22-25).

CHAPTER 6

6:1 Hosea shows that God loves the people. He is making an appeal to them to please return to the Lord. “. . . He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.” If they will return to the Lord, they will have good things happen to them.

6:2-3 Notice the key words. “So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord.” That is the only way one will get to know Him, by pressing on, by continuing to search for Him, to study about Him. He gives them a little information about the Lord. “Pain” is a good thing, and so the Lord’s coming will be a good thing. As in the book of Joel “. . . the day of the Lord . . .” can either be a good thing or a bad thing depending upon whether you are righteous or unrighteous.

“. . . two days . . . third day . . .” = in a short time.

“. . . so let us know . . .” (cf. 1 Jn 2:3).

6:4 “. . . like the dew which goes away early.” Once the sun comes up with its heat, the morning clouds have a way of dissipating. So it is with their loyalty.

6:5 This is Hebrew parallelism in which the first line means the same as the second line. “. . . I have hewn them in pieces by the prophets; have slain them by the words of My mouth . . .” What does “. . . My mouth . . .” parallel? “. . . the prophets . . .” The prophets are the “mouth” of God. They are speaking that which He has told them to speak (cf. Ex 4:15; Heb 4:12).

6:6 This passage is akin to Micah 6:8. “. . . rather than burnt offerings.” The people then, like today, have a problem realizing that because they come to worship does not mean that God is pleased and happy with them. There is more to it than just the “. . . sacrifice . . .” and the “. . . burnt offering . . .” Just because we come, sing praises and drop the dollars in the plate has nothing, ultimately, to do with whether God is pleased with us. Are we loyal to Him in our everyday life? Do we know Him? (cf. 2 Cor 8:5).

6:7 Here is a case where “Adam” can be used generically. “. . . like (men) they have transgressed the covenant; there they have dealt treacherously against Me.” Hosea is coming back to the “covenant” idea. These people have disregarded the covenant. They have made a promise, a commitment with God, but they have not been true to that covenant. They have transgressed it.

“There they have dealt treacherously against Me.” A good parallel passage to this is Malachi 2:10-16. “Dealt treacherously” is one word in the Hebrew and is a key word in the second chapter of Malachi.

6:8 “Gilead is a city of wrongdoers, tracked with bloody footprints.” It is a shame an entire city is indicted like this. It “. . . is a city of wrongdoers, tracked with bloody footprints.” It does not make any difference who it is. There are bloody footprints coming from some abominable deed. Most likely where they have oppressed someone else.

“. . . tracked . . .” Literally “slippery” or “covered.”

6:9 “. . . a band of priests murder on the way to Shechem; surely they have committed crime.” The priests are basically killing the people by their failure to keep the Law and to guide the people in the right way. If a person is not told how he can be saved, you are virtually playing partner to that person’s murder. That is why Ezekiel is told in the third chapter, “You are a watchman.” If a “watchman” does not warn the people of the coming enemy, their blood will be on his “head.” He is partly responsible for the lives of the people. So it is with elders and preachers of the gospel. They are God’s “watchmen” today, and have the responsibility of teaching the truth. If they fail to tell someone what they need to do to be saved, and they end up being lost, then God is going to hold elders and preachers responsible.

6:11 “. . . there is a harvest appointed for you . . .” It is so typical of the prophets to come back with a word of hope, a word of encouragement. They talk about the negative and follow with the positive. There can be hope and there will be hope if what happens back in v. 1 is finally followed through and you return to the Lord. If you return to Him, you are going to find someone who will heal you. You will find someone who will bandage you. From a logical point of view, someone who beats you is usually not the one you are going to ask to put the bandages on. God is the One who is going to discipline them, but yet One who (once they learn the lesson of discipline) will be the first to mend the wounds.

The Lord will “. . . restore the fortunes of My people.” Or “. . . bring back the captivity” (KJV) after the final destruction of Judah in 70 A.D. - all penitent Israel is then in the church.

CHAPTER 7

7:1 Hosea is describing chaos. There are thieves inside, bandits raiding outside, people dealing falsely . . . utter chaos.

“. . . the iniquity of Ephraim is uncovered . . .” He gives the illustration of pulling back the sheet and exposing everything going on. One can see all the things that are happening.

7:2 “. . . that I remember all their wickedness.” How typical this is, these people are like those who Paul tells Timothy about in 1 Timothy 4:1ff. They have their consciences seared as with a hot iron. These people “. . . do not consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness.”

“. . . they are before My face.” It did not occur to them that God is aware of all of these things that are happening. People are not “practicing the presence of God.” They do not think that He is present or that He sees.

The phrase “. . . they are before My face . . .” is a way to try to illustrate how intimately God does see. If I have something that is before my face, I am thinking of it. How well do I see this? This is the way God is with the people. They are before His face, everything they are doing is an open book before Him.

“. . . they do not consider . . .” or “they know not.” Their greatest sin was “to sin and not know it.”

- 7:3** Here we have the upper echelon of authority overjoyed with the wickedness of the people. Sin begets sin.
- 7:4** Everybody is involved in this adultery from the kings down. They dream up sins at night and let them “rise” like leaven so they can get up early in the morning and sin.
- 7:5** “. . . the day of our king . . .” Talking about some special festival that probably acknowledges the ordination of the king, such as his first day of rule. The king welcomes sin. The princes become so drunk they are sick.
- 7:6** “. . . their hearts are like an oven . . .” (cf. v. 4).
- 7:7** “. . . all of them are hot like an oven . . .” The people are like a woman who puts a pot roast in the oven and allows it to simmer. It becomes hotter and hotter until finally it reaches a maximum temperature. These people have allowed these idolatrous practices to start on a small scale, but as long as they continue to do this it becomes worse and worse. A recurring phrase which points this out in the book of Kings is, “They failed to take down the high places.”
- “. . . none of them calls on Me . . .” Here the kings were faced with death, or with captivity. They are not turning to God. This underscores ignorance. If people knew about God then, even though they may have forgotten about Him for awhile, that knowledge would surface later. When trouble came, they would call on Him. But these people have fallen so far they are not calling on Him at all. A nation (Israel) born in sin is dying with one king after another being killed.
- 7:8** “. . . a cake not turned.” They are “half-baked.” They are not what they are supposed to be. Most scholars will say this is a phrase implying “worldliness.”
- 7:9** “. . . yet he does not know it . . .” Is not that tragic? People are draining the life blood of Ephraim and they do not even know “. . . know . . .” This is one of the key words, “knowledge!” The people are ignorant of what is happening.
- 7:10-12** “They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.” Foreign alliances again. They were running to Egypt and Assyria (cf. Isa 10:5-6).

God takes them captive with His net (cf. v. 7; Ezek 12:13). “None of them calls on Me.” No one is looking to God for help. Cf. 5:4-5.

7:13 Notice how many times He uses the word “Me” in the following verses: 13 (3), 14 (2), 15. Everything God has done has either been forgotten or purposefully rejected and rebelled against (cf. 9:17; Mt 23:27).

“ . . . redeemed them . . . ” Time after time from destruction.

7:14 “ . . . when they wail on their beds . . . ” People are genuinely suffering, but they are not crying to the Lord. They are not appealing to the Lord for help. They are going back to their “gods” again. They attempted to use human wisdom in the times of distress.

7:15 Compare 11:3.

7:16 “They turn, but not upward . . . ” They are turning to somebody for help, but it is not upward to God.

“ . . . deceitful bow . . . ” An arrow from a crooked bow always misses the mark.

“ . . . insolence of their tongue.” Hosea talks about how active they have been in saying words against God and leading the people away.

“ . . . derision in the land of Egypt.” He probably is referring to the same thing Isaiah refers to, and that is: these foreign nations are going to witness their fall and captivity. Then they will laugh at the people and say, “They deserved what they got because they cursed their ‘gods.’” This will be their derision in the land of Egypt.

CHAPTER 8

8:1-11 In this chapter Jehovah gives five reasons for the trumpet blast (warning):

- a. Transgression and trespass (v. 1).
- b. False kings and princes (v. 4).
- c. Idolatry (v. 5).
- d. Foreign alliances (v. 9).
- e. False altars (v. 11).

8:1 “Put the trumpet to your lips!” The same warning they were sounding in 5:8 (cf. Deut 28:49).

8:2 Compare Titus 1:15-16.

8:3 Compare Romans 1:25.

8:4 “. . . but I did not know it . . .” Meaning that it was not something they sought God’s answer to. This would have been done through the priests by the casting of lots, but they did not even go that far. If they wanted to appoint someone king, they simply appointed him king. If princes were selected, they were chosen by the king. What he is saying is, “God was left out of every decision of life.” God was ignored and treated as if He were non-existent.

“. . . that they might be cut off.” They did not do it so they would be cut off. That is what is going to happen because of what they were doing.

They had rejected God’s religion and politics! (cf. 1 Sam 8:19-20).

8:5 “. . . how long will they be incapable of innocence?” These people are so absorbed in evil they are incapable of being innocent. Jeremiah has an expression he uses; the people are so involved in sin they do not even know how to blush.

How long will God allow them to walk in sin?

8:6 “A craftsman made it, so it is not God . . .” The fundamental point of idolatry. Hosea uses it. Isaiah uses it. Jeremiah uses it. And that is: “If you made it, it is not God!” If it had to be something constructed by you, then it is not God. In the sermon on Mars Hill Paul said, “The true God is One that “. . . does not dwell in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24).

8:7 This is one of the more famous passages in the book of Hosea. You are tampering with something that is much greater than you ever imagined possible, and you are going to end up paying a high price for it. These people are so carelessly treating their relationship with God that they are going to “. . . reap the whirlwind . . .” (cf. 10:13; Rev 22:8).

“. . . should it yield, strangers would swallow it up.” You are going to lose no matter how events happen. If you are able to produce grain, which you probably will not, the “strangers” are going to consume it anyway. “Strangers” are the foreign nations, most specifically, the Assyrians. When the enemy comes they are going to take all the people have. It surely looks as if Hosea is looking at the end of the nation of Israel. As they sow, they shall reap.

8:8 “. . . a vessel in which no one delights . . .” Worthless pottery or a rejected prostitute.

8:9 “For they have gone up to Assyria . . .” Hosea speaks either in the past tense or as if it has already happened. Hosea prophesied through the captivity and after the captivity.

“. . . like a wild donkey all alone . . .” The donkey should have been kept by itself to maintain its innocence. But Ephraim went among the nations to form unnatural alliances. The “unnatural alliances” is also found in the phrase “hiring lovers.”

8:10 They appeal to the nations for salvation, but they do not receive it. They are now among the nations as a “vessel in which no one delights” (v. 8). No one cares about them at all. They are no longer a valuable “vessel.”

“. . . king of princes . . .” is most likely the king of Assyria (cf. Isa 10:8).

8:11 They made altars for sinning, therefore multiplying their sins.

8:12 This tells us the laws of God were something they not only neglected but even regarded as strange. “. . . they are regarded as a strange thing.” Maybe they considered it “out of date.” People today know little, if anything, about God’s law and many feel it is “out of date,” not in tune with the times (or science).

8:13 “. . . they will return to Egypt. “ We need to understand he does not mean they will literally return to the land of Egypt (cf. 11:5), but that it will be like it was in Egypt. In other words, like the slavery they had endured in Egypt. “Egypt” is a way of describing bondage.

8:14 “. . . forgotten his Maker . . .” How many times has Hosea said this already? The people are “. . . forgetting Him” (cf. 2:13; 4:1,6,10; 5:4; 13:6). It seems that “being satisfied” and “forgetting” go together.

This is the sickness for which all of the trumpets blasts are symptoms of!

“. . . that it may consume its palatial dwellings.” God is going to make what they thought was very secure, insecure. The “palaces” and “fortified cities” are going to be nothing to God.

CHAPTER 9

9:1-2 “. . . and the new wine will fail them.” They considered their harvests gifts from idols. It sounds as if they reaped a good harvest, but that harvest is bringing forth a denunciation from Hosea. Famine is coming and the people are not to rejoice like the nations for they are going to come to a point where they will want to go into captivity.

“. . . they will eat unclean food” (last part of v. 3), “. . . the new wine will fail . . .” (last part of v. 2). Once again, the idea is that prosperity brings illusions.

9:3 Look how clear verse 3 is, “They will not remain in the Lord’s land . . .” “But Ephraim will return to Egypt . . .” Again, understand this to be bondage. They “. . . will return to . . .” bondage (cf. 8:13). “And in Assyria . . .” He tells them exactly where they are going into captivity.

“. . . unclean food . . .” Because it was not sanctified by sacrifices (cf. Lev 23:10-12,15-17).

9:4 “. . . mourners bread . . .” bread defiled by being in a house with a corpse.

“. . . it will not enter the house of the Lord.” Their worship is not going to be acceptable to God, in the sense that it can not even be at the place where the Lord has chosen. They can not offer it in Jerusalem. Neither can they offer the unleavened bread and the libations. They are going to be in a foreign land.

9:5-6 “Weeds will take over their treasures of silver . . .” Their substance and all they are very proud of is going to be wasted in a foreign land. All that they have gathered for themselves, Egypt is going to benefit from. “Memphis” is a large city in Egypt. Both Egypt and Memphis represent captivity.

9:7 “Let Israel know this!” Notice he uses a key word, “know.” If they are not going to know anything else, at least let them know this! (cf. Mic 2:11).

How else can he describe total corruption? These people are already suffering the consequences of their evil.

9:8 Ephraim had been a watchman but because Ephraim had become deeply corrupted, God is forced to visit his own sins upon him.

The phrase “. . . the prophet . . .” designates the time frame when Ephraim was to be a “watchman.”

9:9 Hosea has given this point about God remembering their wickedness two times earlier (cf. 7:2; 8:13). God is not going to forget what they have done (cf. Jud 19 and 20).

9:10 “Israel like grapes in the wilderness . . .” A man wandering in the wilderness would find grapes very beautiful and refreshing. They were something to be desired, but they had corrupted themselves beyond the point where God felt He could keep them safe. He had to cast them away.

“. . . and devoted themselves to shame . . .” In other words, “. . . devoted themselves to Baal.”

“. . . became as detestable as that which they loved . . .” or “. . . were according as they loved” (KJV). All begin to resemble what they love.

- 9:11** “. . . their glory will fly away like a bird . . .” Have you ever noticed that when a bird flies, it flies very quickly? That is the way it is going to seem to Ephraim. “. . . their glory . . .” is something that is going to be gone before they even realize it.

“No birth, no pregnancy and no conception!” One thing thematic in the Old Testament is that children are often symbols of hope. So, if there is no conception, there is no pregnancy, there is no birth, then there is no future. Israel’s numbers will decrease! (cf. Deut 28:58,62).

- 9:12** “. . . until not a man is left.” Even those that are able to have children are going to end up dying. “Children” is also one of the recurring ideas in Isaiah. Twenty-four times Isaiah talks about children and Zechariah talks about children also.

Children playing in the streets and old men walking with canes. It is a beautiful description of a very peaceful situation with a bright future.

- 9:13** He gives them a blessing of a beautiful land, but it is not going to be a beautiful situation. The children are going to be slain. They will be killed by Assyria, but Israel is ultimately to blame. “You brought this upon yourself.”

- 9:14-15** “. . . Gilgal . . .” Israel has “rolled” back into sin (cf. Josh 5:9).

“. . . I came to hate them there!” A sermon topic from this is, “Things That God Hates.” Passages from the book of Micah should be included in it.

“. . . love them no more . . .” “Love” is one of the key words in this book. Even the “princes,” those of power, are rebelling against God. Once again, indicting the hierarchy because of wickedness.

- 9:16-17** Basically, this section from verses 10-17 is saying they had corrupted themselves beyond God’s desire to save them. They are not going to have any hope, they will not even have children to look to the future. Verse 17 is an appropriate summary to the chapter (cf. Deut 28:65; Psa 1).

CHAPTER 10

- 10:1** Prosperity does not make people turn to God. Many times it leads them to multiply altars to false “gods.” To their way of thinking, the false “gods” were their prosperity, they did not realize who was truly blessing them.

10:2 “. . . faithless . . .” or “. . . divided” (KJV). Literally “smooth,” or “treacherous.”

These altars, or false “gods,” are that which has led them away from Jehovah and they are going to pay the price for their apostasy.

10:3 “We have no king.” They have a king, but they really do not have a king. Probably referring, politically, to the fact they were “puppet” kings. Toward the end of Israel kings like Hoshea, and some of the others, were emptying out the treasuries trying to keep Assyria and Egypt happy. That was no leadership at all. But yet, they are making the connection, finally realizing that a poor relationship with God was what had caused all of this.

10:4 “Judgment sprouts like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field.” Their “righteousness” has now become poisonous, like the poisonous plant that grows in a field. I sow some seed, if God loves me “good things” are going to come up in the field. If God does not love me, the field will not yield a productive fruit. If a field grows poisonous weeds and you eat them you die. That is God’s judgment against them. The fact that their fields are growing poisonous weeds would indicate they are not being blessed by God. What they are harvesting from the field shows God has little regard for their attempts to “make amends.”

10:5-6 Their idols will be made a present to the conquering king.

10:5 This indicates how involved these people were in worshiping the “gods.” The people look to these gods for strength and the idolatrous priests will cry over them. But it is not going to do any good. The gods have no power to deliver them.

10:6-8 “. . . Aven . . .” Literally “worthless” or “vile.”

“. . . Cover us; . . . Fall on us!” This is how bad things had gotten. They would rather die than continue in exile and captivity.

Luke quotes this in Luke 23:28-31. This is the response Jesus gives to the women crying over Him as He is carrying His cross to Golgotha. In these verses Jesus is speaking about the coming judgment, probably more specifically the destruction of Jerusalem, when things will become so bad. He is saying, “You think things are wicked now, you do not realize how much worse it is going to be.”

Then in Revelation 6:16, talking about the judgment of God, they will say “. . . to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us, and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb . . .’” Even though John is not quoting verbatim this text in Hosea, he certainly had that idea. People are trying to “run” from the coming judgment.

10:9-10 God's anger was slow but sure!

10:9 What he is referring to in “. . . the days of Gibeah . . .” is the last chapters of Judges. The people of Gibeah sinned against the rest of Israel. But Benjamin tried to protect Gibeah when they had become degenerate. Israel rallied together and fought Gibeah. Benjamin decided to fight for Gibeah rather than fight against it. “From the days of Gibeah you have sinned. . .” Hosea is indicting them from that point in time until now.

10:10 “. . . their double guilt . . .” is probably:

- a. The rejection of the Lord as king, and
- b. The rejection of the Lord as God.

They rejected Him as God when they introduced idolatry.

10:11 This “. . . trained heifer . . .” is going to be brought under control by God. He is going to put His yoke over the neck of Ephraim. The “threshing” that Ephraim loves to do is to “thresh” in the fields of idolatry, which is not really a yoke at all. Notice He says, “. . . over her fair neck . . .” A neck of a heifer that has been put to the plow is not going to have a “fair neck.” It is going to be bruised and caloused by constant rubbing of the yoke (cf. Deut 25:4).

10:12 Hosea is now going to give a call to repentance. Even though he has already pronounced doom and captivity, it does not stop him from trying to get the people's lives back to God's ways. You do, basically, the same thing with a girl who becomes pregnant out of wedlock. You encourage her to turn her life back to the Lord and to repent of her sins. When she does those things it does not mean that the baby is going to go away. If somebody becomes diseased from sexual encounter outside of God's law of marriage, it does not mean the disease is going to go away even if he repents. Hosea is trying to get the people spiritually right with God although they are going to pay physically the consequences for their sins.

This is a great verse to teach repentance. You sow with a view to harvesting righteousness. You reap in accordance with kindness. Now it is time to get things going again! Do some planting, some sowing. If you do not sow, then you are not going to reap. Actually, the scriptures teach in a number of places that everybody sows (cf. Gal 6:8-9). “You sow to the flesh and of the flesh reap corruption” (cf. Isa 55:6-9).

10:13 “. . . plowed wickedness . . .” Israel cultivated wickedness.

Hosea is continuing this very thought, everyone sows something. “. . . trusted in your way . . .” Completely misunderstanding the value of everything God had done for them.

10:14 “As Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day,” refers to some point in history we do not know about. Apparently, it was a very gruesome battle in which mothers and children were killed. Even the innocent are not spared.

“. . . Shalman . . .” = Shalmaneser (2 Kgs 17:3-6) = Sargon (Isa 20:1).

10:15 “At dawn the king of Israel will be completely cut off.” This shows how close they are to the end of God’s patience “. . . at dawn . . .”

Her final war will be short but complete.

CHAPTER 11

11:1-4 Choices:

- a. God’s choice (v. 1).
- b. Our choice (v. 2).
- c. God is love (vv. 3-4).

11:1 In spite of all of Israel’s apostasy, idolatry and wickedness God continues in His love for this ungrateful nation. Hosea is going to review Israel’s history and call attention to the fact that as God called them out of Egypt once, He will have to call them out of “Egypt” again (cf. Ex 4:22-23).

NOTE: What about 9:15, “I will love them no more” as opposed to “. . . I loved him . . .?” God loves His people, but hates what they have become. It is like a parent and child. You might hate what the child has become, but you still love the child.

This is quoted in Matthew 2:15. Matthew applies it to the calling of Jesus out of Egypt, to which He had fled from Herod. This is a perfect example of a double fulfillment, because Hosea has nothing to do whatsoever with calling Jesus out of Egypt. When Matthew uses the Greek word PLEROO, “. . . it has been fulfilled that which was spoken, out of Egypt I have called my son . . .” He is saying, “Here is a fuller meaning of this verse.” Hosea is specifically talking about God’s love for Israel and even though they will go into bondage, He will call them out of bondage just as He did when they were a young nation.

NOTE: This verse helps us to understand more how the Rabbis got to their method of biblical interpretation. They believed there is a spiritualized message

behind every text. They also believed it is our responsibility to uncover that spiritualized or allegorical message. Thus, many of the writings in the Mishna, Talmud, etc. were trying to bring out the spiritual message behind the text. No scripture was what it appeared to be.

11:2 “They,” meaning the prophets of God, understood that all godly preachers are no different from the Isaiahs and the Jeremiahs of old. When people are called to righteousness, they go further into unrighteousness. Do not take it personally thinking there is something inadequate in yourself. Remember Jeremiah, Isaiah, Hosea and Amos had the same response to their preaching. “The more they called the people, the more they went from them.” When the people’s hearts are inclined to unrighteousness, preaching to them, trying to encourage them to repent and return to righteousness, will not always bring it about. As a matter of fact, some will just say, “This (unrighteousness) is what I have chosen” (cf. Jn 3:18-21).

11:3 Notice the key word “know.” Verse one also uses the key word “love.”

11:4 There is an emphasis on the word “I” in these verses (cf. vv. 3,4,8,9). This illustrates the love of God, and how that love was repaid with ingratitude.

11:5 He is not talking about the land of Egypt. “They will not return to the land of Egypt . . .” They will not return to the physical land in Egypt, but will return to the bondage they had known in Egypt. “Egypt” here means “bondage” (cf. 8:13; 9:3).

“Because they refused to return to Me.” This sounds very much like Hosea’s comment in 9:17, “. . . because they have not listened to Him . . .”

11:6-7 Once again, God’s prophets say, “Return to the Lord” And there is no one who “. . . exalts Him” (cf. Heb 3:13).

“. . . bars . . .” Are the city gates.

“. . . bent . . .” Literally “impaled” or fastened upon.”

11:8ff These passages are some of the most emotional in the book of Hosea.

11:8 How can God let go of these cities He has loved and helped to develop? “Admah” was mentioned in Genesis 14:8 and “Zeboiim” in Deuteronomy 29:23. They were cities destroyed in the days of Abraham (Gen 19:23-25). It is hard for God to view Ephraim and Israel as He viewed those cities.

“. . . My compassions are kindled . . .” Here God is shown in His great attribute of compassion. The nations deserve utter destruction, but God’s love would

temper this judgment with mercy. It does not mean He was going to erase judgment. He is going to temper it.

11:9 “I will not execute My fierce anger . . . and I will not come in wrath” (cf. Isa 55:8; Jer 26:3).

11:10-11 Because God is this way they should come to Him in trembling and fear. If they would do that they would find a God who would dwell with them in security. “. . . I will settle them in their houses . . .” (cf. Isa 11:10-11).

11:12 This verse is actually 12:1 in the Hebrew Bible.

“Israel . . . Judah . . .” He indicts not only the north, but the south as well. Judah is unruly, Ephraim is full of lies.

NOTE: Cf. ASV on this verse. Also see Apparatus in the Hebrew Bible. Study the word “unruly” (ruleth, ASV) the Hebrew word RUD.

CHAPTER 12

12:1 “Ephraim feeds on the wind . . .” The covenant made with Assyria. How fulfilling can the wind be? If you are hungry and you take in a big swallow of wind, you are still going to be hungry. You are pursuing something that is not going to be fulfilling. Specifically, he is talking about the covenants with the foreign nations, Assyria and Egypt (cf. Ex 23:26-32).

“. . . oil is carried to Egypt.” The alliances with these two nations were economically draining the nation.

12:2 “The Lord also has a dispute with Judah . . .” (cf. 11:12). Just as the prophets were prophesying the destruction of Israel some one hundred years before it happened, the same thing is happening with Judah (cf. 1 Kgs 12).

12:3-5 God uses Judah as an example to show them how they should strive for holiness.

12:3 This nation had an attitude problem. He is using an illustration to show the people they had a tendency to be stubborn and rebellious. Now they are a “mature” people and think they have a right to contend with God.

12:4 This is a parallel with Jacob’s wrestling with the angel in Genesis 28 where his name was changed to “Israel” which means “striven with God.” “. . . he wept and sought His (the angel’s) favor . . .”

“Bethel” means “house of God.” This is what Jacob called the place where he encountered the angel. NOTE: The “angel” and “the Lord” in that context are the same (cf. v. 5).

12:5 Jacob is held up as an example of someone who strove with God, came to God and sought the favor of God. God was faithful to accept him and to bless him and it will be the same with them, if they will do likewise. He is the same God, so they should be able to expect the same result.

“Striving” in the sense that “. . . he wept and sought His favor . . .” He wanted Jacob to realize who was more powerful. He was striving against God at first, but the “wrestling” is what turned Jacob around.

“He found Him at Bethel.” That is where Jacob really found God. His relationship with God prior to that was somewhat strained.

12:6 “Therefore . . .” ,in view of what happened to your forefather, “. . . return to your God, observe kindness and justice and wait for your God continually.” This is what Christians need to do. We need to take the active step in returning.

The way to return is by:

- a. Observing kindness and justice and
- b. Waiting for God continually.

Sermon Seed: Turn, Keep and Wait.

12:7-8 They do not see themselves as sinning. Ephraim is saying, “I have not done anything wrong!” They are saying, “The end justifies the means, therefore we have no sin.” Sound familiar?

Hosea will tell them in the following verses that “God saw your sins.” The fact that you erected altars and offered sacrifices to these “gods” is the sin. And they were able to build these altars was with money accumulated falsely in the first place, “. . . a merchant, in whose hands are false balances . . .”

Notice Ephraim’s boastfulness in verse 8.

12:9-11 “. . . tents . . .” or “. . . tabernacles” (KJV). Feast of tabernacles = Remember God!

Compare Leviticus 23:42-43.

“Is there iniquity in Gilead?” They reply, “No!”

“ . . . I have also spoken to the prophets . . . ” They were without excuse!

“ . . . their altars are like the stone heaps . . . ” A person cannot even plow in a field without seeing altars erected everywhere.

“ . . . stone heaps . . . ” A person sowing in a field would often stop, pick up a rock and cast it to the side. Those rocks would grow to be huge piles. Their altars are like those “ . . . stone heaps . . . ” huge and numerous.

12:12-14 Jacob had to serve flocks for many years in order to receive a wife. But God brought Israel up out of Egypt and they did not have to strive for it. God provided help for them. He provided Moses as a deliverer, and He gave them the land of Canaan for a possession even though they had done nothing to earn it. But Israel has not followed the faithfulness of Jacob. Now they must reap the “wages” of their unfaithfulness.

The “ . . . Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him . . . ” God gave them that for which they did not strive, and they did not appreciate it as they should have. Therefore a rejected God will reject them! (cf. Ezek 33:1-6).

CHAPTER 13

13:1 The causes of Israel’s fall are now going to be given in specifics. Ephraim had been exalted, but it was through Baal they exalted themselves, did wrong ,and died.

“He (Ephraim) exalted himself in Israel . . . ” This refers to 1 Kings 11:26ff. The first king, Jeroboam, was from the tribe of Ephraim (cf. Prov 14:34; Mt 23:12).

13:2 “ . . . and make for themselves molten images . . . ” Most people have enough wisdom to know that if they have any hope of going to heaven they have to keep restraints on sinning. But they were multiplying their sins, “stacking” sin on top of sin (cf. Job 31:26-27).

“All of them the work of craftsmen.” Once again, the foolishness of idolatry (cf. 8:6).

13:3 The worshipers are going to pass away. Four types of illustrations; they will vanish from the land as a:

- a. Cloud (suddenly),
- b. Dew (quickly),
- c. Chaff (violently) and

d. Smoke (completely).

All of these are associated with things that do not last long. It is the same with these worshipers and their idols. There will be no stability in their religious system whatsoever.

13:4-5 Remember God's power against Egypt's gods! and in the wilderness!

13:4 "... not to know ..." The key word, "know."

"For there is no savior besides Me." Isaiah repeats this over and over again in chapters 43 and 44. "Save" or "salvation" is a key word in the book of Isaiah. Hosea and Isaiah are basically preaching the same message.

13:6 "... their heart became proud ..." (cf. Prov 16:18).

13:7-8 God is going to tear the heart out of the nation of Israel (cf. Isa 3:18).

Have you ever noticed in the scriptures, especially in the Old Testament, how often references are made to things like this? How often do you walk in the mountains or the woods and are afraid a lion is going to jump out at you? I do not ever think of anything like that. But to these people that was a real threat. Just like the prophet in 1 Kings who was attacked by a lion and killed. These people were constantly in fear of their lives being taken by wild animals. "I will encounter them like a bear robbed of her cubs ..." There is nothing more ferocious than a mother animal defending her young.

"... I will tear open their chests ... as a wild beast would tear them." They have witnessed this. Maybe some of their own children had lost their lives to animals. But this is an extremely vivid illustration of how God is going to deal with these people.

13:9 There is tragedy in this verse. They have walked away from the only thing that could save them. They had the ability to save themselves right in their hands. Illustration: A person had a heart problem. He had a prescription of nitroglycerin pills to take when an attack comes. He has an attack and reaches for his bottle but cannot get the cap off. His heart beats harder and faster as he struggles with the cap. Later, he is found dead with the life-saving pills unopened in his hand. The very thing that could have saved him was in his hand. This is true of so many people today. They will go to their Maker in sin while holding Bibles in their hands. They had the means of salvation right there, but never opened that which could have provided salvation. "That you are against Me, against your help." God was their hope, but they did not take advantage of Him.

13:10 “Where now is your king . . .” They had relied much upon the leadership, ability and strength of the king. “Where is he in whom you had trusted?” The rule of their kings was punishment for them because they rejected God as their king.

“. . . king . . .” probably Hoshea, the last king of Israel.

13:11 The point is: You wanted a king. You had a king. Now look at your situation. Where is your king? They do not really have a king even now. “It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes” (Psa 118:5-8, specifically v. 8). These people obviously did not take that Psalm to heart (cf. 1 Sam 8:7-20).

13:12-15 The sins of Ephraim are laid up for judgment. Birth pangs are upon him, but he is not preparing the place of bringing forth. They are going to be cast out of His presence. The sin stored up is going to be born and the punishment is going to be brought on the people.

13:12 “. . . bound up . . .” As in a roll for storage.

13:13 “. . . for it is not the time that he should delay at the opening of the womb . . .” or “. . . should not stay long in the place of breaking forth of children” (KJV). The child dies if it does not come out during labor.

13:14 Hosea is saying, “Not only are you going to give birth to pain, but you will be giving birth to a new life because God is going to redeem them from destruction. It is as if they are giving birth to twins. The first child is “Punishment.” The second child is “Redemption.” One is going to come before the other.

“. . . compassion will be hidden from My sight.” He is talking to “Death” and “Sheol.” He is not going to have any compassion on “Death” and “Sheol” by giving them anymore bodies. He saying, “O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.” An interesting way for God to say to the grave: “I am not going to give you anymore bodies.” Death is pictured as a mouth that is never satisfied.

13:15 This illustrates the power of the wind. “The wind of the Lord coming up from the wilderness . . .” It may flourish for awhile but the east wind will destroy a prosperous plant in a very short time (cf. Jonah 4:8).

“. . . east wind . . .” Represents Assyria.

“It will plunder his treasury of every precious article.” Everything of value is suddenly gone. It is like a farmer looking over his fields that are ripe unto harvest. He counts all of the money he is going to make from it. Then suddenly comes a

scorching east wind and sears his crops. God says this is going to happen to Israel.

13:16 “Their little ones shall be dashed in pieces.” This is not the same terminology used earlier. That is describing bitter cruelty, as much as events, and shows there will be no hope. When the little ones are killed and the pregnant women ripped open, there is no hope for the future of the nation.

Fulfilled! 2 Kings 15:16; 8:12.

CHAPTER 14 FINAL APPEAL TO THE NATIONS

14:1-2 “And receive us graciously . . .” Hosea is even giving them the words to speak (cf. 2 Chron 7:14; Jer 6:16).

Without confession there is no salvation (cf. Heb 13:15).

14:3 “For in Thee the orphan finds mercy!” He is not only encouraging them to repent, but giving the words of repentance.

“. . . the orphan . . .” An orphan is one who has been dealt a bitter blow in life. He has no father, yet God is One who is there, ready to love them and to take them to Himself.

“Asshur” (KJV) = “Assyria.”

Neither:

- a. Foreign alliances,
- b. Their own might, nor
- c. False gods can save them and

They must confess this to Jehovah.

14:4 If they will say that, God would heal their apostasy, “If you will do this, then I will do that.”

“I will heal their apostasy (backsliding - KJV).” It is not a translation problem, but it is an interesting idea, “healing apostasy.” Someone decides, “I must stop this apostasy and turn back.” Then God will heal the “wound” of the apostasy.

His love is free, the rest depends upon their repentance.

14:5 “And he will take root like the cedars of Lebanon.” He is going to bless them and make them strong again.

14:6 “His shoots will sprout . . .” The future will be bountiful.

14:7 A beautiful description of prosperity.

“They . . .” Not “he” (Israel), but “they,” all nations or people who turn to God.

14:8 “From Me comes your fruit.” How many times has Hosea said that? God is the source of all blessings.

After the question mark, all references are to Jehovah.

14:9 This is a fit ending to this book.

“. . . know them . . .” One of the key words.

Hosea has said time and time again that ignorance is the downfall of these people. If they will return to where they understand and know God’s law and obey it, then God will bless them and reward them (cf. Deut 4:3-9; Psa 111:10).

AMOS

NAME:	Amos
MEANING:	Burden Bearer
DATE:	755 B.C.
AUDIENCE:	Israel
THEME:	Jehovah is just
SPECIAL NOTE:	Prophet of Justice
OUTLINE:	I. Judgment against the nations.....Ch 1-2 II. Judgment against IsraelCh 3-6 III. Visions regarding the future.....Ch 7-9

LESSONS:

God is the God of the entire world. He is not referred to as the God of Israel.

Privilege implies responsibility.

Failure to recognize and accept responsibility brings punishment.

All are obligated to live up to their own knowledge.

Ease and idleness lead to open sin.

Sin will not go unpunished.

Insincere and will-worship bring punishment.

People have not changed. The message “you are living in sin” still causes severe problems for the preacher and teacher.

God rules and is in active control of the world.

When we have no will to obey God our worship to Him is vain.

God is patient in warning man, but He does not speak and warn endlessly.

AMOS INTRODUCTION

I. NAME.

“Amos” means “Burden Bearer.” Probably because Amos has been given a heavy load to bear so far as trying to deal with the people and their many sins. Amos is from Tekoa which is approximately twelve miles south of Jerusalem. Apparently the call from God came to him directly while he was tending flocks (cf. 7:15). Amos was from the tribal region of Judah, but he prophesied to Israel. Amos a keeper of sycamore trees (7:14).

II. CHARACTER SKETCH OF AMOS.

A. The Mission of Amos:

1. To preach to the people of Bethel. Bethel was where a golden calf was set up by Jeroboam.
2. To preach to a people who felt no need for preaching (7:12).
3. To preach “Thus, says the Lord.” This is a key phrase in the book of Amos occurring 44 times.

B. His Manner:

Amos is a prophet that, in many respects, is like Jeremiah. We can feel and understand much of the character of Amos. Amos lets us know a little bit of what he feels, what he is thinking and some of the problems with which he is having to deal.

1. He was a humble, simple, plain man of God.
2. He was blunt, direct, courageous and dynamic.
3. He was stern and self-contained.
4. He was fearless and uncompromising.
5. He was an orator.
 - a. Literary style is grave, measured and rhetorical.

- b. The writer of the purest and most Classical Hebrew in the entire Old Testament. “Amos” has its counterpart in the book of Hebrews in the New Testament.
 - c. His language was shocking and electrifying.
6. He was deeply religious; a man of conviction and boldness.
 7. He totally refutes the wisdom (man’s wisdom) of his day.
 8. He brings his readers to face up to the ultimate reality.
 9. He put “first things first.”
 10. To Amos, “What does God think?” is the supreme question. Then he puts compassion and power into every day life.
 11. He was wise in not preaching over the heads of the people.
 12. He was clever in catching the attention of the people by pronouncing judgment on their enemies first.
 13. He was fearless in not tickling their ears but telling them the truth.

C. His Message:

The message of Amos that comes across loud and clear is that the root of evil from which all others flow is the corruption of the worship of God. There has never been an age when God left it up to man to decide what would be acceptable or unacceptable in worship.

1. Amos made Israel’s sins very clear to them:

There were selling the righteous into slavery (2:6-7; 5:7).

They were oppressing the poor (2:6-7; 5:11; 8:6).

Sexual immorality (2:7).

They told the prophets not to preach (2:12; 5:10; 7:14ff.).

Very materialistic (3:15; 4:1; 6:1-6).

Religiously corrupt (4:4-5; 5:21-23).

Giving bribes (5:12).

Corrupted in business practices (8:5-6).

2. Amos not only calls for justice but for social justice specifically.

In recent times liberal religious groups have abandoned the Bible for social activism. Over this same period the conservative groups have often defended the Bible and at the same time neglected the poor, oppressed, imprisoned and helpless.

True religion demands sensitivity to social issues:

- a. Abortion should not be left to the Catholics or the Right to Life movement.
- b. The plight of the elderly must not be left to federal agencies for handling.
- c. Families falling apart is a concern of Christians before it is the responsibility of psychologists.

III. DATE.

Around 760 B.C. Jeroboam II is on the throne in Israel and Uzziah is reigning in Judah.

IV. BACKGROUND.

Amos was called by God when both religion and society were bankrupt in Israel. It was at a time when Israel had great prosperity which was also accompanied with great wickedness. The people of Israel did not see how any disaster or defeat could possibly be coming their way. They were a proud and careless people who did not realize the kingdom was being undermined from within. Their sins were sapping the vitality of the kingdom. This was unrecognized by the masses.

The people had the idea that since they were God's people they had nothing to fear. They felt that the God who had delivered them out of Egypt would surely not forsake them. They felt they had continued to worship God in a way that would be acceptable to him. But they were about to find out what their true relationship was with Jehovah God.

When Amos first appeared as a prophet of God in the Northern Kingdom he was probably hailed with much fanfare and appreciation. He began by announcing that God's judgment was coming upon the surrounding nations. The children of

Israel were probably elated and welcomed such a message. But, just as suddenly, the prophet tells of God's coming judgment on Israel. From this time forward his popularity was doomed because he had "quit preaching and gone to meddling." He was now seen as an enemy that must be watched so that when he had made a mistake he could be removed. He was now a "threat to God's people."

Amos has been called by many the "John the Baptist of the Old Testament." He proclaimed God's mighty message although this made him an outcast from God's people. Amos stressed the righteousness and justice of God in all things. He reminds the people that God will deal justly with mankind. He bids them to repent. We can learn a lot from this "country preacher who came to town."

V. NOTE.

See paper, "The Sins of Israel" included with these notes.

THE WARNINGS OF AMOS
by
Dan Holland

“I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (Amos 5:21-24).

Being a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees, Amos presented a contrast to the standards of other prophets of his time when the Lord called him from Judah to preach to the people of Israel. He prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam when the people lived in a time of peace and prosperity, but also in a time of manifold transgression against God.

Though the Israelites during the time of Amos did not love justice and righteousness, still they were very particular to keep the outward and ceremonial forms of their religion. They held the feasts and came together in solemn assemblies. They offered burnt-offerings, meal-offerings and peace-offerings, as well as songs of praise. Yet Amos reveals that these were the people “that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek” and who “commanded the prophets, saying Prophecy not.” Amos wrote to these hypocrites: “Come to Bethel, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgressions; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes every three days; and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill offerings and publish them: for this pleaseth you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah.” It pleased the Israelites to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and to give freewill offerings because they could then publish their goodness and proclaim their own righteousness. They were the chosen people, the descendants of Abraham, and in their hypocrisy they used their religious practices as a legalistic shell to cover over the iniquities of their hearts. But being the chosen people would not save them from their transgressions: “Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities.” Amos wrote: “They hate him that reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.” But he pleaded with them: “Ye who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth, seek him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning.”

The times and teachings of Amos reveal dangers also for the church today. The church should be careful to avoid the practice of using the number who sit in solemn assemblies and who give offerings into the church treasury as the only criteria for the righteousness of the church. The Christian must serve God with all his being, realizing

that justice and righteousness is of God and must be a part of the Christian's life. The Christian must not forsake the poor and despise the meek, for the "mighty" according to the world live in weakness before the power of God. All the world must be able to say that where a Christian is, there is true love for God and man and a desire for what is good and noble.

Amos' enemy, Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, was typical of the priests who claimed to be following God but who were actually only appeasing the fleshly and vain desires of the Israelites. Amaziah sought to convince Jeroboam that the mouth of Amos should be stopped. Amaziah said: "the land is not able to hear all his words." In the view of Amaziah, as long as the people came together in solemn assemblies, made offerings, and sang songs, this was all it took to keep the priestly hierarchy in business--so why should he worry about the thoughts and intents of their hearts as they went about their daily affairs? As long as they met and gave offerings and perpetuated the priestly function, why should he worry about their hearing the whole counsel of God? Why should he be concerned if they were materialistic, selfish, vain, and haters of righteousness? In fact, as long as their religion applied only to the solemn assemblies and songs and priestly functions, did this not give more distinction and prestige to the priests? It is obvious that Amaziah did not miss these considerations, and he did not want Amos to upset his apple cart.

Today, is it not a temptation to preachers to center Christianity around the solemn assemblies and the functions of the preacher to the extent that a false security of righteousness among the people can exist though their daily affairs may show a lack of love and justice and righteousness as well as a disregard for the cause of Christ when away from the church building? Is there not a danger that the offerings of the assembly into the church treasury are exalted to the extent that the Christian's total obligation before God is neglected? Certainly, the Israelites were taught in the law to assemble, to give offerings, and to sing praises, but the Lord intended for these practices, as well as the functions of the priests, to induce the Israelites to grow to greater personal spirituality, and he did not intend for these practices to become legalistic substitutes for heart-felt devotion to God which is shown in daily behavior and personal goals as well as in public assembly. We read in Deuteronomy 6:4-7: "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah: and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Today we must be careful that these word are upon our hearts, and that we teach our children the heartfelt way of Amos and not the legalistic way of Amaziah.

FIRM FOUNDATION
December 15, 1964

AMOS GOES TO WASHINGTON
Reflections on Amos 6 and 7, King James Version

1. Woe to them that are at ease in Washington and trust in bureaucracy and the power of the dollar, chiefs of this most powerful race, to whom the people of America look.
2. Pass over to London, and see; and from there go you to Moscow the great; then go down to Rome of the Italians: are you really better than these lands, as you so often boast?
3. You that put off the day of reckoning, being indifferent toward immorality, and lawlessness and creeping anarchy (even some of your chief religious leaders seem to endorse sexual license, while some are heralding the death of God);
4. That lie upon mattresses, which to sleep on is like sleeping on a cloud, and grow over-fat on too much rich food while you loll in overstuffed chairs hearkening to trivia on TV;
5. That writhe like tormented savages to the weird sound of guitars played by long-haired murderers of music;
6. That drink wine and martinis, stingers and grasshoppers, that smoke longer and longer cigarettes (although the medics warn they may cause lung cancer), and are not grieved for the affliction of the young men in Viet Nam or for the youth heading for anarchy in the nation.
7. Therefore shall the prices of commodities rise higher and higher with encroaching inflation, and your banquets be taken away by reason of the population explosion and world famine
8. The Lord has sworn by himself, "I abhor the pride of America; therefore will I deliver up the country with all its senators and congressmen and those who ride on political coattails."
9. And it shall come to pass that if there remain ten men in one house, they shall all die; for the thermonuclear power of the foe is great, even as your own.
10. And if some survivor brings the bodies from the rubble for cremation, and cries, "Are there any left alive?" and one shall say, "No," then shall he say, "Let us grieve silently; for we were forbidden to pray in the classroom, and now we may not mention God's name."

11. Behold, the Lord commands, and the White House shall be smitten, and the little houses shattered.
12. Shall Cadillacs race over boulders? or tractors plow in rock? For you have turned my Word into a myth, and the fruit of righteousness into “pot” and LSD.
13. You who rejoice in nothing, and say, “We defeated the Nazis by our own strength and will build the Great Society by our own ingenuity; by our technocratic know-how we will bring peace and plenty in the earth.”
14. “Behold, I will raise up against you nation after nation, O house of Washington,” says the Lord the God of hosts; “and they shall afflict you from the United Nations to Viet Nam.”

Amos 7:10, 12-17

10. Then Amaziah, the far-out liberal at Washington who had jettisoned the Apostles’ Creed, sent word to the President, saying, “Amos has conspired against you, for he is a dangerous right-winger and extremist, and the country is not able to bear his words.”
12. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, “O you dreamer! Be off to the Ozarks and eat cornbread there, and do your preaching there:
13. But preach no more in Washington, for it is the seat of the bureaucrats and the headquarters for the nation.”
14. Then answered Amos and said unto Amaziah, “I was not a preacher, not even a seminarian; nor was my father a preacher or a seminarian; but I was a sheep-herder and fruit-picker, without so much as membership in a union.
15. “And the Lord took me from the flock, and said, ‘Go and preach to my people America.’
16. “Now therefore hear the word of the Lord: You say, ‘Do not preach against America, and drop not your word against the house of Washington.’
17. “Therefore thus says the Lord: ‘Your wife shall become immoral in suburbia, and your sons and daughters shall be swallowed up in riots; you shall lose your common stock and your preferred holdings, and you shall die in a land polluted by Communism. And America shall fall captive to dark circumstances beyond her control.’”

Lon Woodrum

AMOS EXPOSITION

CHAPTER 1

“. . . two years before the earthquake.” We do not know much about this “earthquake.” It is also mentioned in Zechariah 14:5. Natural calamities were of such note that people dated things by them.

1:2 The Lord “roars from Zion” because He is coming in vengeance. He is like a lion coming to devour the flock. The people have so immersed themselves in sin that God is coming now to deal with them and their sins. He is not going to tolerate their sinfulness any longer. Amos, unlike the other of the Minor Prophets, is going to devote more of his writing in dealing with the various nations.

There are several recurring phrases written against these nations. First of all: “Thus says the Lord.” Then: “For three transgressions . . . and for four . . .” (cf. 1:3,6,9,11,13; 2:1,4,6).

The “fire” example does not occur with everyone, but it occurs with most. For example - 1:4,7,10,12,14 (different word here, but the “fire” theme still occurs) - 2:2,5. Israel is the only nation that He will not send “fire” upon.

Another example that recurs in those sections has to do with the “citadels.” “. . . will consume the citadels . . .” (cf. 1:4,7,10,12).

1:3 First he talks about Damascus. Damascus was north of Israel. Damascus and Syria are the same. “For three transgressions . . . and for four . . .” It is an expression trying to show a compiling. “Let me talk about your three sins, on second thought, your four sins.” It is the most recent sin that is causing “the vat to overflow,” so to speak. It is “the straw that breaks the camel’s back.”

“I will not revoke its punishment . . .” This is a phrase God uses with all of the other nations. There are eight nations going to be condemned. The seventh is Judah; the eighth Israel. He is punishing everyone outside of God’s people, then he will punish God’s people last. “I will not revoke its punishment . . .” indicates God’s wrath against these nations is full and the time of punishment has come. He is going to give specifics about each nation concerning what they have done.

“Because they threshed Gilead with implements of sharp iron.” Coming through and subjugating the people of Gilead. This refers to 2 Kings 8:7-15; 10:32-33; 13:3-7).

1:4 “Citadels” comes from the Hebrew word ARMON and occurs twelve times in the book of Amos. Probably the most significant verse is 6:8. “Citadel” means “a

palace or a castle.” This would be pronounced ARMON, but it is akin to the English word “armor.” The “citadel” was a special place only for the wealthy and elite. It was a tall, thin tower having only one entrance in the base (or foundation) and could be easily protected. Enemies who came too near would be pelted with rocks (cf. Jud 9:50-53). If an enemy were to break through the city walls, the citizens could defend the “citadel” for an indefinite period of time. But what the enemy would do was to “fire it,” and “smoke” the people out. This is what God is saying in this book.

“I will send fire upon the house of Hazael, and it will consume the citadels . . .” He is going to burn them out of their place of protection.

1:5 “. . . the gate bar . . .” is the entrance to Damascus. When gates are broken the people are defenseless.

“Aven” means “vanity.” Probably a play on words in which these people were very vain in their self-esteem, how great they thought they were.

“So the people of Syria will go exiled to Kir.” God will remove them. They are going to go into captivity. “. . . Kir . . .” We know of no extra-biblical information verifying the Syrians going to Kir, but we believe they did. Kir is in Syria.

1:6 Notice that in these judgments uttered against the nations five out of the eight begin with, “Thus says the Lord . . .” and end with “Thus says the Lord . . .” This is being done by God’s authority.

“. . . Gaza . . .” lies west of Israel in Philistia. “Because they deported an entire population to deliver it up to Edom.” Apparently they had involved themselves in some way in trading people for monetary gain.

1:7-8 “Ashdod . . . Askelon . . . Ekron . . .” These are all main Philistine cities. It is interesting to note the only city that is not mentioned is Gath.

1:9 To the northwest is the third nation of “Tyre.” “Because they delivered up an entire population to Edom.” They did the same thing the Philistines did. But they also have an additional sin “and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.” This is probably speaking of the covenant between David and Hiram made in 1 Kings 5:1. This is the only covenant between them recorded in scripture.

1:10-11 Basically Amos enumerates three sins of Edom:

- a. They pursued their brother with the sword. Who was their brother? Israel was.

b. They stifled their compassion. Literally, the word for “stifled” is “corrupted.” It seems as if it was an active “bending” of compassion; a purposely trying to suppress any compassion they might have felt.

c. They could not control their anger.

1:12 “. . . Teman . . .” was mentioned in the book of Obadiah, which is a book devoted to prophecy against Edom.

1:13 “Ammon” is straight east from Israel. The Ammonites descended from Lot and his daughters (Gen 19:30ff.).

“Because they ripped open the pregnant women . . .” Their sin is that they had no pity in their lust for land. They loved the land, they wanted to “. . . enlarge their borders.”

1:14-15 “. . . Rabbah . . .” is the capital city. It will be destroyed and the people, including their king, will be carried into captivity.

CHAPTER 2

2:1 “. . . Moab . . .” is to the southeast and the Moabites are also the descendants of Lot and his daughters. Their punishment is going to be “. . . because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.” This is probably talking about unusual and unnecessary cruelty in warfare. This may sound a little bit awkward, but that will be the indictment that God has against the Assyrians and the Babylonians. They did not just defeat you, they annihilated you. They did not just take you captive, they completely humiliated you, and degraded you and did everything possible to make a laughingstock of you. What the Moabites were doing to other kings and peoples was not acceptable in God’s eyes. Even today we have “war crimes,” unusual tactics during war that are unacceptable even in our world.

2:2 “. . . Keriath . . .” is a chief city of Moab. It is mentioned in Jeremiah 48:24,41. “And Moab will die amid tumult . . .” They are going to be destroyed in war.

2:4 South of Israel lies “. . . Judah . . .” Their sins are basically three:

a. “They rejected the Law of the Lord.”

b. “They have not kept His statutes.” This is disobedience which is very similar to the first point.

c. “Lies.: The NAS footnote says “false gods.” These “lies” were concerning the “false gods.” They were teaching “lies” which claimed these gods could hear, were powerful, etc. The people believed those lies.

Notice the difference between punishment of the guilt of the nations and the punishment of the guilt of Judah. Judah's guilt was religious apostasy. God does not indict any other nation, besides Judah and Israel, for religious apostasy. Why is that true? They were not His covenant people, therefore they were not accountable to the Law of Moses (cf. Rom 2:14).

2:6 and following is directed at Israel. See: "Sins of Israel" included with these notes.

2:6 "... Israel ..." is the eighth and final nation. These are the people to whom the majority of the prophecy is addressed.

"Because they sell the righteous for money and the needy for a pair of sandals." This is not talking about slavery, it is talking about priorities. They forfeit righteousness for money. They neglect the needy so that they might have a pair of sandals which, in today's terminology, would be for a pair of "tennis shoes." Most people have a pair of tennis shoes, and many people have several pairs. They are usually not very expensive. God does not say that they are selling the needy people for something that is really worthwhile, but something that nearly every Jew would have, and that is a pair of sandals. He is saying that they are selling the needy "cheaply." Some people will oppress the poor because they stand to gain a great deal, but these people are oppressing the poor for virtually no gain at all. So, "Why do it?" If the benefit is not very much from oppressing these people, then why do it? These people are doing it because wickedness is out of control.

2:7 "These who pant after the very dust of the earth on the head of the helpless ..." This exaggeration shows how greedy people were for land, and Amos uses it as an illustration.

A man is chasing after the little dust that might be accumulated in someone's hair. These people are so "land hungry" they are panting "... after the very dust of the earth on the head of the helpless." God wanted the people to be more sensitive to the cares of the poor and the needy, but they are oppressing them and trying to find ways to make themselves richer at the expense of the poor.

"And a man and his father resort to the same girl ..." They both use the same harlot. Temple prostitution probably because of the next phrase, "... in order to profane My holy name."

2:8 "And on garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar ..." They bow low and worship on garments that have been used for a contribution.

"... beside every altar ..." shows how pervasive a practice this was.

“. . . in the house of their God they drink the wine . . .” This is irreverence in worship. “. . . in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.” This refers to Exodus 22:26-27. It is also related to the cloak pledges. Some scholars think these garments have been taken from the poor as a pledge or as a loan, but are being used at pagan altars. Thus, the poor would never get their garments back.

“. . . who have been fined . . .” has to do with people who are prosecuted, condemned and “fined.” This is similar to a legal fee or a fine for breaking the law. If a person trespasses, he has to pay a fine. Those “fines” are then used for purchasing wine, and partying “in the house of God.”

2:9 “. . . though his height was like the height of cedars . . .” He considered himself strong and mighty, but God is going to punish him and bring him low.

“I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below.” This describes complete devastation. Once again men are trusting in themselves and in their strength. One wonders when they are going to learn. We need to learn this! We cannot trust in our own strength.

2:10-11 “. . . Nazirites . . .” Those who rejoice in taking the Nazirite vow.

“Is this not so, O sons of Israel?” God is saying, “We have been together a long time. I have been your God and have taken care of you for a long time.”

2:12 “But you made the Nazirites drink wine . . .” The Nazirite vow (Num 6) required they abstain from alcohol.

“You shall not prophesy!” “Everyone I send to you, and everyone committed to Me, you try to silence.” How true that seems to be today. It seems that anyone who really desires to preach God’s word ends up having discouragement, and people try to put a “muzzle” on their prophesying (preaching).

2:13 The weight of their iniquity is so full, it would seem that they cannot hold any more. God’s judgment is ready to fall. This also has the idea of something being inescapable. Amos brings out that idea more vividly in verses 14-16. The impossibility of escaping judgment.

2:14-16 It is inescapable! Even the strong are going to be without their strength to lean upon.

CHAPTER 3

This chapter begins a series of sermons. Chapters 3-5 begin with SHEMAH, “hear this word . . .” Each of these chapters is a sermon. This is the first of three “Sermons of Doom.” They are:

- a. “Price of Privilege” - Chapter 3.
- b. “Penalty of Pride” - Chapter 4.
- c. “Peril of Procrastination” - Chapter 5.

SERMON #1: THE PRICE OF PRIVILEGE.

3:1-2 Greater blessings require greater responsibility to properly use those blessings. These people had been blessed. They have been chosen by God or they are God’s possession (cf. Ex 19:5-6). In Luke 12:48 Jesus says “. . . everyone who has been given much shall much be required . . .” This is the New Testament concept. This passage refers to Exodus 19 where God says, “. . . you will be My only possession.” 1 Peter 2:9 tells Christians we are God’s possession, a chosen nation.

3:3-6 This is the beginning of seven questions. There is a reason for everything. There is a reason why two men walk together. There is a reason why a lion roars or a young lion growls or a bird falls into a trap. And there is a reason why calamity occurs in a city. He expands the thought in verses 7-8.

3:7 This is a verse which can be a very good friend if we will remember it. And that is, God does not do things with His people from pride. He is not going to punish without having said He will punish. He is not going to condemn without having laid down the basis for that condemnation. God is not like the Greek’s gods. For example, the Greeks never knew what their gods wanted from them. Our God is not like that. He has made His will fully known so we can know what we must do to be saved. That is why John could say, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 Jn 5:13).

He “. . . does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets.” God has told them that this calamity is coming. God is going to punish them.

3:8 “A lion has roared!” (cf. 1:2). “Who can but prophesy?” It was the same with Isaiah who said he could not keep quiet (Isa 55:3 cf. Ezek 33:11).

3:9 God wants these pagan sinners to notice that Israel rivals them in wickedness. And these nations are called to be witnesses to testify how wicked Israel has become.

3:10 The scriptures teach, in a number of different places, that people can practice evil so much that they fail to remember how to do good. A person lies so much he forgets how to tell the truth. You will be good at whatever you practice. When you practice something enough, you do it instinctively without thinking about it. These people practiced wickedness instinctively because they had practiced it so much.

“. . . their citadels . . .” were not just a problem the nations had, but they were a problem the Israelites had as well. “The citadels” were just an example of the corruption that was going on. Not only was a citadel a symbol of pride, but it was a place where wicked things occurred. They “hoard up violence and devastation in their citadels.”

3:11 “. . . your citadels will be looted.” God describes how their citadels will be looted. Apparently they stockpiled riches and supplies in them. What other things they did in them we do not know, but it was against God’s law whatever it was. This is where the people put their strength rather than in God. 6:8 is a key passage concerning the citadels. Arrogance and “citadels” go together.

3:12 Here a lion “grabs” the sheep and the shepherd is able to reach out to save a little part of it. That is what is going to happen to Israel. He is talking about a remnant. God is going to reach and “grab an ear,” and that is all that is going to be saved of the nation.

3:13-14 “. . . the altars of Bethel . . .” Amos and Hosea mention this “altar of Bethel” many times and it seems we can never appreciate just how wicked Bethel had become. What is so tragic is that the very name of “Bethel” means “house of God.” It was the name Jacob gave this place.

3:15 “. . . winter house . . . summer house . . .” These people had wealth and luxury. They had two houses. They also had their “. . . houses of ivory.”

“The Price of Privilege”

They had the privilege:

- a. Of being God’s Chosen.
- b. Of having beautiful cities with citadels (fortified cities).
- c. Of wealth. With winter houses, summer houses and houses of ivory.

They did not use those privileges for good, but for evil.

CHAPTER 4

SERMON #2: THE PENALTY OF PRIDE.

The penalty: they are going to be brought low and become slaves.

4:1 “. . . you cows of Bashan . . .” He is talking about the women! Listen to what he says, “. . . who say to your husbands, ‘Bring now, that we may drink!’” These women want to become drunk.

“. . . husbands . . .” Literally, “lords” (ADONAI) (cf. v. 2). “. . . Lord God . . .” (ADONAI YHWH). Amos is using the same word. They are saying to their “lords,” but the Lord is saying something different. It is a play on words. The normal word for “husbands” is ISHI, “my man.”

These women are more active in the affairs of society than one might normally think women would be. They “oppress the poor and crush the needy.” Women, generally, are pictured in the Bible as being those that have the best interest of the poor and the needy in heart. But these women of Israel have become so wicked they are active in the oppression of the poor and crushing the needy.

“Bring now so that we may drink!” They are living in luxury and wanting to have another party.

4:2 “. . . meat hooks . . . fish hooks . . .” These women are living in luxury and now they are going to be led off into captivity with the “. . . meat hooks . . .” and the “. . . fish hooks . . .”

4:3 “You will go out through breaches in the walls . . .” The very walls, which they thought were going to be their salvation from the enemy, end up being walls that their enemies walk right through because they have such big holes in them.

4:4-5 These verses are not a literal encouragement to do these things.

“For so you love to do, you sons of Israel . . .” Amos is saying this in a sarcastic way. The point is, they like to offer sacrifices to these “gods.”

4:6-13 In these verses the people are already being chastened. Notice the following disciplines:

- a. Withheld bread (v. 6).
- b. Withheld the rain (v. 7 - when it was needed the most).
- c. Discrimination (vv. 7-8 - it is just you who are suffering).

- d. Ruining of crops in various ways (v. 9).
- e. Plague (v. 10).
- f. Possibly young men slain (v. 10 - different ways God killed them).
- g. Overthrow of cities (v. 11).

4:10 “. . . stench . . .” Usually if there is a “stench” from dead bodies it indicates there were too many bodies to be buried. There are only a few who have been killed. The living are capable of handling the corpses and burying the dead.

4:11 “. . . a firebrand snatched from a blaze . . .” Before you were completely consumed you were snatched from the blaze; yet you have not returned to Me. Sodom and Gomorrah were so completely destroyed that nothing was left. God was going to overthrow them to that extent, but yet He held back just slightly and “. . . snatched the firebrand from the blaze . . .” Even getting that close to complete annihilation did not keep them from worshiping their false idols.

4:12 “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.” One of the great texts in Amos.

4:13 “The Lord God of hosts is His name.” This is the God you are going to meet:

- a. He creates.
- b. He declares.
- c. He sustains.

CHAPTER 5

SERMON #3: THE PERIL OF PROCRASTINATION.

The peril of procrastination is that you have become stagnate, become lukewarm. This is what has happened to them. They have become stagnant, lukewarm and sluggish.

5:1 “Hear this word . . .” This is the third of our beginning sermon phrases. A “dirge” is a “lamentation,” a mournful psalm.

5:2-3 This is the mournful psalm. You can almost hear someone singing. “. . . the few that are left . . .” A massive devastation and loss of life.

5:4 Notice the repetition of the word “seek” in the following verses: 5:4,5,6,14. All of the occurrences are meant to be that which is the counter to procrastination. When a person is procrastinating he is not looking for work or doing anything. So He says, “Seek me that you may live, but do not resort to Bethel.”

5:5 “Resort” is the same Hebrew word just translated “seek.” “Seek me that you may live, but do not seek Bethel.” Seek God, do not seek Bethel. Seek the true God as opposed to seeking the idols.

“. . . Bethel will come to trouble.” Why would someone want to seek something that is going to go into captivity or fall upon “hard times?”

5:6 God says the same thing again. “Seek the Lord that you may live.” The same basic idea that he says in verse 4b and that He will say in verse 14.

“Lest He break forth like a fire . . .” Amos likes to use the idea of “fire.” He talked about fire with the citadels, now he is talking about it again. He is also going to use “fire” as one of his visions in 7:4-6. Think of people who lived in a society dominated by wood being very fearful of fire. We are fearful of fire today! Fire is a devastating, awesome thing and very hard to control. You do not want the Lord to “. . . break forth like a fire . . .” You can almost see the vividness of the fire igniting a wood house and how quickly it consumes that dry wood. “. . . consume with none to quench it . . .”

5:7 “. . . turn justice into wormwood . . .” Amos is saying “justice” has become “rotten.” They are turning righteousness into unrighteousness.

5:8 “. . . Pleiades and Orion . . .” This God is so powerful He made the constellations. “. . . calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth . . .” Amos is making reference to the evaporation cycle.

“The Lord is His name.” He says this in contrast to the false gods. It is not Baal. It is not Chemosh. It is not the Asherah. It is YHWH! YHWH is the one who is able to do all of these things. No other god can do them.

5:9 Once again Amos stresses the idea that God is stronger than the people’s strongest.

5:10 The people hate reproof and right speaking. Notice the contrast with vv. 15,21. “If you want to hate, this is what you should hate. You should hate evil and love good.” Verse 21 - “I hate, I reject your festivals.”

“They” are the people of Israel. And the “him” whom they hate represents the prophets. “. . . they abhor him who speaks with integrity.” These people have used their emotions against God’s servants. That is so true today, as well. When somebody reproves, when somebody speaks with integrity, people do not like that individual. Why? Because he is not speaking and preaching in generalities, he is preaching to their needs.

“ . . . reproveth in the gate . . . ” The “gate” was the place where judgments were made. So if he “ . . . reproveth in the gate . . . ” he is condemning them at their place of judgment.

5:11 This is another reason why it is thought 3:15 refers to people in general and not to kings specifically.

5:12 “ . . . distress the righteous . . . ” Notice that there are still some righteous. And notice how the righteous respond to what the general populace is doing. They are “distressed” by what they are seeing. People who are truly righteous are not afraid to let their feelings be known when things are happening. They do not sit silently and allow unrighteousness to run rampant in the congregation. The righteous are distressed and they let that distress be known (cf. 2 Pet 2:6-8).

“ . . . turn aside the poor in the gate.” A poor man walking through the gate happens to owe another some money so he is turned aside and a condemnation is pronounced on him right then. Perhaps this is similar to what happened in Matthew where the servant said, “Pay me what you owe me.” The person was not able to pay and was thrown into prison. A man’s wife and children would become slaves in order to pay off the debt, and everything the man owned was confiscated.

5:13 Things have become very bad. “ . . . the prudent person keeps silent, for it is an evil time.” They know things have become so bad it will not do any good to speak out. The people will not listen. They want to do wrong. And as Amos 4:5 says, “ . . . so you love to do, you sons of Israel . . . ” (cf. Hos 4:4). The point that was made is that it was too late to reason with the people at this point. They are too far gone. They think they are so smart that they can argue and contend with the priest, the expert on the law. But they are so ignorant they do not know what is going on.

An example for us today. Paul and Silas were told to shake the dust off of their feet. It was not going to do any good to preach to that city and they knew it. So they would go try some place else.

5:14 This passage is very similar to what Peter says in 1 Peter 3:10 where he quotes Psalm 34:12-16. Amos is trying to get them to start seeking the Lord, not seek evil. The result is “ . . . that you may live . . . ”

“Just as you have said!” This is a situation in which they know what is right. “You have said, ‘Seek good and not evil, as he might live; and . . . the Lord God of hosts will be with us.’ You have said this. Now why do you not believe it and practice it?”

5:15 “Hate evil, love good . . .” Notice all of the imperatives here. “. . . establish justice in the gate!” It was against the law to charge interest (cf. Ex 22:26). What they were doing was charging interest (usury). “Establish justice in the gate” would be being fair in your money-lending practices.

“May be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.” This is talking about grace. If you would start doing what is right, the gracious God will be one to respond.

5:16 “. . . professional mourners to lamentation.” This shows they had professional paid mourners in biblical times. In Matthew 9 Jesus went to heal the ruler’s daughter. All the people laughed at Him and He put them out. They were “professional mourners.”

5:17 “. . . I shall pass through the midst of you . . .” This is the reason for the mourning. Also, “the day of the Lord” could be a day of judgment. How He passes through will be that which He prophesies in chapter seven. Locusts, fire. etc.

5:18 In v. 16 the people are saying, “alas, alas,” then He says, “Alas, you who are longing for the day of the Lord . . .” The people were crying for “. . . the day of the Lord . . .” wanting it to be a day of deliverance. But it is not going to be a day of deliverance. It is going to be a day of “. . . darkness . . .”

5:19 This is the plight of the wicked man. God is coming and you may think you are escaping, but the fact of the matter is, there is no escape.

“. . . a snake bites him.” This also gives an insight into how their homes were built. With the clay, wood, pillars and various tree branches it was a perfect place for snakes. A man escapes a bear and a lion, runs home and leans his hand against the wall where a snake bites him. The people would have understood that illustration very thoroughly.

5:20 You people who cry for “the day of the Lord” had better understand what “the day of the Lord” will be like for you. The application of that today is: We have people who are talking about the coming of the Lord and that they are going to be “raptured.” Those people are just as misled as the people in Amos’ day. They need to be thinking what “the day of the Lord” is going to be for them. It is not going to be something they want to have come.

5:21 “I hate . . .” Here are some other passages where God says He hates - Proverbs 6:16; Malachi 2:16; Amos 6:8; Hosea 9:15.

“. . . solemn assemblies . . .” What kind of “assemblies” do they have? They are not just “getting together,” they are very “solemn,” very rigid and humble worship.

5:22 Why is it God hated their burnt offerings and their solemn assemblies? Because it was hypocrisy in worship. They had men starving and people in need. They were busy during the week oppressing the poor and then they went to worship to bow down and present offerings to God!

5:23 This is a powerful verse. Does God feels that way about our songs sometimes? We sing, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" and He is saying, " I do not want to hear this anymore. Take away the songs. I do not want to hear your noise."

Illustration: A person dies and goes to heaven. Upon his arrival an angel takes him back to a worship assembly. He walks into a huge church building. He sees a large group of people who are singing. This person says to the angel, "It is obvious that these people are really singing, but I do not hear anything." The angel does not respond, but continues to walk him down the aisle till they get close to the front. And there is a small boy singing, "Jesus Loves Me." He can hear the boy singing and says, "Everybody else is singing but this is the only one I can hear." The angel says, "I just wanted you to hear what God hears."

I wonder how true that might be? God says, "Take away from Me the noise of your songs." The people honor Him with their lips, but their heart is far from Him (Isa 29:13). The "fruit of the lips" has to come from the pureness of the heart. And that is where verse 24 brings it all together.

5:24 "But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." This is what God wants, justice. He talked about "justice in the gate" (v. 15).

5:25-26 God asks a question: "What good were your sacrifices when you were worshiping Me?" This is called "syncretism" which means "the blending of two things together." The Israelites tried to worship idols and worship God (JHWH). It does not necessarily mean they were doing them together, but they were doing them both. They were trying to put a little bit of man and a little bit of God in their life. This is denominationalism. The blending of a little bit of Bible and a little bit of man.

5:27 "... hosts ..." is a word usually meaning "army." So this is a "God of armies" that is going to make "... you go into exile beyond Damascus ..." It is His way of saying, "There is not anything that you are going to be able to do about it. You are not going to be able to stop Me from doing this."

CHAPTER 6

- 6:1** Woe to those who are at ease in Zion . . .” This the second “woe.” The first “woe” in 5:18 was translated “alas.” It is the same Hebrew word. This particular “woe” is pronounced upon the “revelers” of Samaria. They are “. . . the distinguished men of the foremost of nations, to whom the house of Israel comes.” They are ruling Israel. And since they are “. . . in the mountain of Samaria . . .” they are Syrians. “To whom the house of Israel comes” probably refers to paying tribute.
- 6:2** He invites them to consider other nations that have tampered with God’s plan or God’s people. “Calneh” is beyond the Euphrates in the Babylonian region. “Hathath” is to the north.
- 6:3** “. . . would you bring near the seat of violence?” Once again, indicting these leaders for oppression.
- 6:4** “. . . beds of ivory . . .” Omri and Ahab were noted for that particular luxury.
- “. . . sprawl on their couches . . .” as if they did not have a care in the world.
- “. . . eat lambs from the flock . . .” So, not only are they eating well, but they are wealthy because they have “the flocks” from which they can afford to eat. “. . . calves from the midst of the stall . . .” these people are very affluent.
- 6:5** “Who improvise to the sound of the harp . . .” means they are basically operating in a carefree society. Because they have time to learn music, write songs, etc.
- 6:6** “Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls . . .” is probably illustrating the volume of wine which they have available to drink and are drinking. “Sacrificial bowls” were much larger than just drinking cups.
- “. . . the finest of oils . . .” is definitely related to the rich. The poor would have oil, but they would normally have to limit that oil to medicinal purposes. Here the wealthy can pour oil all over themselves.
- “. . . they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.” Once again, they are not at all concerned about the direction of the nation. Everything is going well for them. As long as everything is going well for them, they are not overly concerned others.
- 6:7** “Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles.” Those who were at the head the exiles, when they were being marched out, were usually the wealthy and the powerful (kings and princes).

6:8 “. . . I will deliver up the city and all it contains.” These people have looked at the security of their city (the city walls and the citadels in the city) and they were constant reminders to the wealthy that everything is fine. They have a “nobody can touch us” attitude. God says, “I hate those things and what those things have encouraged you to become.”

The word “detest” (NAS) is literally the word “hate.”

6:9 God is going to make a sweeping punishment of these people.

6:10-11 A person comes to see how his relatives fared in the latest onslaught. What he finds is “. . . if ten men are left in one house, they will die.” Someone asks, “Is anyone left?” He will reply, “No one except me.” Then the other person will say, “Do not say anything. The name of the Lord is not to be mentioned.” The idea here is, “Let us not speak His name and incur further wrath.” Verse 11 reflects this idea.

6:11 Even though there is no one left, the Lord has not finished His destruction because the house still stands. If you speak the name of the Lord, then you might remind Him that He was going to destroy the house, too.

6:12 Amos is now going to give two similes to show how stupid the rulers are in thinking that they can escape the judgment of God. The first simile is: “Do horses run on rocks?” The second simile is: “Does one plow them with oxen?” Some translations read “the sea” - “Does one plow the sea with oxen?” A person without intelligence tries to plow a rock field with oxen or tries to plow the sea. But just as stupid as that is, “. . . yet you have turned justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood . . .” It is not intelligent to tamper with God’s laws. “Wormwood” means “bitterness” (cf. 5:7).

6:13 “Lo-debar” means “a thing of nothing.” It has no substance. They are relating to something that does not have any value or substance whatsoever.

“. . . Karnaim . . .” means “a pair of horns.” “Horns” symbolize “power.” By their own strength they have seized world power.

6:14 The nation is going to be destroyed by another nation that is unnamed, and they are going to act as an instrument of God. And their punishment is going to be widespread. “. . . the entrance of Hamath to the brook of the Arabah.” North and south they are going to be afflicted. They have no place to run and hide.

CHAPTER 7

This chapter begins the five visions. The visions are found in chapters 7-9. The visions are as follows:

- a. Locusts (7:1-3). This is similar to the way Joel was using locusts as a devouring army of the Lord.
- b. Fire (7:4-6).
- c. Searching Plumb Line (7:7-13). A plumb line is that which is used in construction to make something straight. The wall, he is going to say, is out of alignment. It is so bad it needs to be torn down and be rebuilt. The wall was the very thing they were trusting in.
- d. Basket of Summer Fruit (8:1-14).
- e. Utter Destruction (9:1-10).

Epilogue: Promise of Messianic Hope (9:11-15).

7:1 “Thus the Lord God showed me . . .” This is how the first four visions are introduced (cf. 4,7; 8:1).

“. . . a locust-swarm . . .” The Lord has formed this locust-swarm and it is ready to attack when the spring crops begin to sprout. The locusts are going to destroy it before it even has a chance to grow.

“. . . king’s mowing . . .” “Shearing” is in the footnote of the NAS. Scholars have interpreted this phrase symbolically, saying that the “king” is Jehovah and the “mowings” are His judgments. When you mow a field, you cut it down. That is what the Lord’s “lawnmower” (the locusts) are going to do. And this interpretation seems to make the most sense. Others say that it simply means that after the king received his part, the locust devoured the rest, so there was not anything left for the people. The implication would be that when the king and his princes were satisfied, the locusts wrought their havoc and there was nothing left for the people. This interpretation does not seem to make sense with the first part of the verse which says, “. . . He was forming a locust swarm when the spring crop began to sprout.”

7:2 Here the prophet intercedes and the prayer of the righteous save the nation.

7:3 “The Lord changed His mind about this. ‘It shall not be,’ said the Lord.” Had it not been for the prayer of the righteous few, then disaster would have come. This is a good lesson that needs to be learned. The prayer of a few can impact what happens to the multitude.

7:4 **Second Vision: FIRE.**

“. . . began to consume the farm land.” The fire is threatening to devour the whole land.

7:5-6 “This too shall not be . . .” once again the prophet prays and God answers.

7:7-8 Third Vision: THE PLUMB LINE.

“I will spare them no longer.” It is as if the “plumb line” is showing how crooked the wall is. That is what is going to happen when the people have God’s “plumb line” put up against them. They are so totally corrupt they are no longer going to be spared.

7:9 God measures that nation. And since the nation is so far “out of line” He is not going to be deterred again. Judgment is coming! Amos pleaded on behalf of the people twice and this is the last time. This idea of measuring is also used by John in Revelation 11:1. Here, the people of God are going to be measured to see whether they measure up to God’s word. Ezekiel 40:3ff uses the same idea of measuring things.

7:10 An interruption in the visions. “. . . sent word to Jeroboam . . .” This is Jeroboam II.

“. . . the land is unable to endure all his words.” The accusation is that Amos is preaching treason, and the king ought not to tolerate someone preaching treason.

7:11 These are the words of “treason.”

7:12 He says, “We in the north do not want to listen. Go back home! Prophecy and eat your bread there.”

Some have looked at the phrase, “. . . there eat bread and there do your prophesying!” and wondered, is he talking about doing his work and living or eating down there? But others have said, Amos has been living on virtually nothing in order to prophesy to these people because they are not paying him anything. If he went back to Judah they would receive his prophecies a little bit better and pay him enough to eat. There may be a point in that view.

7:13 Notice how Amaziah condemns himself. He does not say anything about God at all. He does not say, “Your words are not true to what the ‘god’ said.” His only reason for not wanting Amos was the fact that it was “. . . a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence.” It certainly was not the Lord’s sanctuary or the Lord’s house.

7:14-15 Amos says, “All I am is a shepherd and grower of sycamore trees.” Amos is affirming that all he is doing is speaking the words of the Lord. It is the Lord speaking now. It is the Lord declaring what is going to happen both to the house of Jacob and to the priests and their families. Amos had no alternative but to speak.

7:16-17 “. . . unclean soil . . .” most likely Assyrian soil. Amos does not spare his words when the Lord tells him what to say.

NOTE: See “Amos Goes To Washington” for one person’s view of the application of Amos chapters 6 and 7.

CHAPTER 8

8:1-2 “The end has come for My people Israel, I will spare them no longer.” The Lord declares that the harvest is past and the nation is ripe for destruction. We get the idea that the harvest is past from the phrase, the end has come.

8:3 “Many will be the corpses . . .” A great number of deaths.

8:4-5 “. . . the new moon . . .” is a festival. They want to finish this festival so they can continue to make gain and trade (Num 28:11). “Beginnings of your months;” (also Num 10:10) when they closed all of the shops. These people are yearning for the new moon to pass so they can return to their corrupt trade. Parallel to that would be people who hate Sundays because they do not get to open their business and make money. Also compare James 4:12-27. In James they are not considering God. And that is what is happening in these verses.

“To make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger . . .” They are dreaming of the “small bushel” and the “big shekel” and ways to cheat with dishonest scales. They are not happy unless they are making money.

8:6 “. . . buy the helpless for money . . .” This is probably talking about slavery (cf. 2:6-7). Some think it refers to their buying the houses. Whatever the helpless have, they are buying it (cf. Col 3:5ff.).

What is “the refuse of the wheat?” Chaff.

8:7 God is not going to forget is a fact Hosea stated a number of times (cf. Hos 7:2; 8:13; 9:9). God does not forget!

8:8 “. . . and subside like the Nile of Egypt.” The nation is going to “sink” like the River of Egypt.

8:9 “. . . that I shall make the sun go down at noon . . .” The nation’s “sun” is going to go down, so to speak. This is apocalyptic terminology. This could also carry the

idea of the peak of the Israelite society, because Amos references their “ivory palaces, winter homes and summer homes” (cf. 3:15).

8:10 Their feasts are going to be over. God is going to bring an abrupt end to their feasting. People are no longer going to benefit from all the Lord’s providential care.

8:11-12 What an interesting prophecy this is. Amos, Hosea and Isaiah are contemporaries and are all preaching to Israel at the same time. The people are hearing a lot of the word of the Lord. Yet, as far as we know there was no prophet who went into captivity with the Israelites. Whereas prophets did go into captivity with Judah. For example: Daniel and Ezekiel went with them. Jeremiah went with them part way, or perhaps went up and then came back. These people are going to be carried off, but they will not endure famine for physical things like bread and water. They are going to want to hear a word from the Lord so badly that “people will stagger from sea to sea, and from the north even to east” trying to find somebody who has a word from the Lord, but there will be no one (cf. Isa 55:6).

8:13 “. . . beautiful virgins and the young men . . .” Being beautiful and being young would not benefit anyone.

8:14 “. . . by the guilt of Samaria . . .” Here he talks about the Israelites and the cities of Samaria and Dan where altars had been set up.

“. . . they will fall and not rise again.” These people had sworn by the foreign temples, and the “gods” represented by those temples.

CHAPTER 9

9:1 This is the fifth and final vision. It is called a vision because “I saw the Lord standing beside the altar . . .” Amos sees something else, “. . . the altar . . .” Possibly Amos is visualizing the altar in Jerusalem built by Solomon, because that was the place where the people were supposed to atone for their sins. God is standing beside it, ready to punish them for their sins. No atonement now.

“Or a refugee who will escape.” This is like the “ten men in the house getting killed” idea being repeated. No one is going to be spared. However v. 8 will show us that there will be some who will be spared because the Lord is going to relent. “. . . I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob.”

9:2 “. . . from there shall My hand take them . . .” They are burrowing into the ground, so to speak, to try and hide from captivity. God’s hand is going to reach down and pluck them up. “. . . and though they ascend to heaven . . .” If they would go to the mountaintop to hide they will still be found.

- 9:3** “from there I will command the serpent . . .” Reminiscent of Jonah.
- 9:4** An awesome prophecy on the part of Amos. God is just not going to tolerate the people and their sins any longer.
- 9:5** Amos repeats the phrase used in 8:8.
- 9:6** Once again, making reference to the process of evaporation (cf. 5:8). He is using this as an illustration of the power of God. It is difficult to irrigate land with all of the pipes and all of the pumping machinery that has to be used. But can you imagine what it would be like for somebody back in this time to transport stream water to the land and all of the trouble that would be? Amos says, “He who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth . . .” with God, it is easy. He calls for it to be done and it pours “out on the face to the earth,” underscoring the complete authority God has over all nature. “The Lord is His name” (cf. 5:8).
- 9:7** “Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me, O sons of Israel?” In other words, they had become as if they are not His people anymore. “. . . Philistines . . . and . . . Syrians . . .” this is curious. Had He brought some sort of deliverance from captivity for the Philistines? It is not known what this is talking about. Apparently, the Lord had done something for the Philistines and the Syrians that was equal with what He did with Israel in the land of Egypt. So, some have speculated that this is merely trying to underscore the fact that God does good things for all nations not just Israel.
- 9:8** “. . . I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob. . . “ There will not be a complete devastation, there will be a remnant!
- 9:9-10** “Those who say, ‘The calamity will not overtake or confront us.’” Those people who were brazen enough to think nothing bad could happen to them are going to be taught a severe lesson by the Lord.
- 9:11** God says He is going to restore some from the remnant of the kingdom of David. The reason we know that this passage is Messianic is because Peter quotes this verse in Acts 15:16-18 during the Jerusalem council. It does not match exactly the text we have in Amos, and that is because Peter is quoting the Septuagint.
- 9:13** Here a person tries to plant seeds in the ground, and the person trying to harvest it is right behind him. That is very productive land. It is so productive one cannot even keep up with the harvest.
- 9:14-15** “. . . and they will not again be rooted out from their land . . .” This sounds very much like “. . . and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it . . .” If this is talking about the church, which Peter says he is in Acts 15, then this context is

one showing the restoring of the captivity of Israel is really synonymous with the conversion of the Gentiles. How would that make sense? How could the conversion of the Gentiles be paralleled with the restoring of "My people Israel?" Israel was scattered throughout all of these pagan lands (v. 9). When the gospel was preached to these pagan lands, the gospel was being preached to Israel again because Israel was in those pagan lands. Those lands were Gentile but Israel was now a part of those lands. So when the gospel was proclaimed to the Gentiles, it was proclaimed again to Israel.

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