

Chapter 11

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah

We are now on the last part of our journey through the Old Testament. Only a dozen books remain! None of these 12 books are very long. They have been called "the minor prophets" because they are each short in length, but as we learned in Chapter 9, the minor prophets each have a message of **major importance!** This chapter will consider the main message found in four of these books, and Chapters 12 and 13 will consider the main message found in the remaining eight minor prophets books.

Hosea—God's Unfailing Love!

Hosea was God's prophet during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and _____ (Hosea 1:1), kings of Judah (the southern kingdom). At that time Jeroboam the son of Joash (Jehoash) was the king of Israel (the northern kingdom). Can you find these kings on the chart in Chapter 5? *Note:* The Jeroboam mentioned in Hosea 1:1 is Jeroboam II.

Hosea lived at the same time as Isaiah (see the kings mentioned in Isaiah 1:1). Isaiah's ministry was to the southern kingdom of Judah but Hosea's ministry was to the northern kingdom of Israel. In the book of Hosea the name Ephraim is found 36 times (see Hosea chapter 5). This name was used to describe the northern kingdom of Israel. Hosea's message was to the northern kingdom of Israel, which was also called Ephraim.

To See His Message, Look at His Life!

Hosea acted out his message by living out his life. God wanted to teach the nation Israel something very important and to do this He used Hosea's marriage! Hosea married a woman who would prove to be unfaithful to him, and who would turn away from him and go after other lovers (Hosea 1:2). God used this marriage tragedy in the life of his prophet Hosea to teach the nation Israel an important truth. The unfaithful woman's name was G _____ (Hosea 1:3). This woman loved other men and left Hosea for them. Of course, this left Hosea as a heartbroken man. Hosea still loved Gomer in spite of her great sin, and in Hosea chapter 3 we learn that Hosea took Gomer back to himself and said to her, "thou shalt not be for another man; so will _____ also be for _____" (Hosea 3:3).

Did You Get the Message?

God wanted Hosea's marriage to be a picture of something very important. This was the message: ***Israel treated God the same way Gomer treated Hosea!*** Hosea's personal marriage became a picture of God's relationship with Israel. Hosea pictured the Lord and Gomer pictured the sinful nation.

Israel had been as a wife to the Lord. Israel had a relationship with the Lord that was precious. The Lord had committed the honor of His name to her. The Lord cherished her with tender love. But what did Israel do? The nation committed spiritual adultery and became unfaithful to the Lord. Israel turned away from the one, true God to serve and worship other gods. Through the prophet Hosea God sought to bring His people back to Himself.

The king of Israel during this time was Jeroboam II. Did he do good or evil in God's sight (2 Kings 14:23-24)? _____ The people in his kingdom followed his example! The nation had turned away from the Lord.

Three Great Truths

The book of Hosea reminds us of three great truths about God:

1) GOD IS GRIEVED WHEN HIS PEOPLE ARE UNFAITHFUL TO HIM. How does God feel when His people are unfaithful and go after other gods? Ask someone like Hosea who has had an unfaithful wife! Hosea's message came straight from his heart. The heartbreak that he experienced was meant to be a picture of God's heartbreak. God is never delighted when His people forsake Him. Jeremiah was the prophet of the broken heart to the kingdom of Judah (see chapter 9). Hosea was the prophet of the broken heart to the kingdom of Israel. Just as Luke presents the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15), so Hosea presents the story of the prodigal wife. Both of these stories reveal much to us about the heart of God!

2) GOD EVER HATES SIN. God can never condone or overlook sin. Sin is always a very serious thing to God. Even today unfaithfulness to God is a very serious sin (see James 4:4). "Spiritual adultery" (James 4:4) takes place whenever believers leave their "first love" (Revelation 2:4) and begin to love the world or pleasures or anything else more than God.

3) GOD WILL NEVER CEASE TO LOVE HIS OWN. God hates sin but He loves the sinner. In the book of Hosea we learn of the deep love of the Lord, even for His sinning and unfaithful people. He has an unfailing love for His own! Look at the following verses and see if you can find the love of God for His people: Hosea 2:14-15; Hosea 6:1-3; Hosea 11:1-4; Hosea 14:4-8.

Return!

Because He is a God of unfailing love, He seeks to win back those who have forsaken Him. Even though she was sinful and unfaithful, Hosea took back his wife Gomer (Hosea 3:1-3). God does the same thing for the nation Israel. One of the key words in the book of Hosea is the word "**return**" (it is found in the book 15 times). A key verse is found in Hosea 14:1: "O Israel, _____ unto the LORD thy God." See also Hosea 6:1-2. There is hope for sinners! There is hope for unfaithful people! There is hope for those who are far from God! God's message to such people is simple: **Return!**

Who Moved?

Think about your own life. Are you close to the Lord or have you drifted away? Have you turned away from the Lord?

Think of yourself in a rowboat right next to the dock (but not tied to the dock). As you are sitting there enjoying the scenery, the boat gradually starts to drift away. After an hour has passed you are amazed at how far you are away from the dock: "We were once so close; how did we get so far from each other?" Well, who moved, you or the dock? _____ **If you are not as close to the Lord as you should be, guess who moved?** For the solution to the problem, see James 4:8! God's Word (such as the salvation promise found in John 3:16) never moves and never changes. Ten years from now God's Word will still say the same thing! If we refuse to believe John 3:16 that is our fault, not God's! He does not move; we do! [A similar illustration:

A husband and wife were driving in a car. They had been married for about ten years. The husband was driving; the wife was sitting on the passenger's side by the window. The wife said, "Dear, do you remember when we rode together in the car after we were first married? We were sitting so close together that someone driving behind us probably thought there was only one person in the car. What happened?" The husband answered, "Honey, I never moved."]

Another key verse in Hosea is found in the very last verse (14:9): "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are _____, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall _____ therein." Compare this verse with Hosea 14:4. God loves us and God wants to heal our backslidings (our drifting away from the Lord), but we must choose the ways of the Lord! God's way is always the best way!

Joel—The Day of the LORD

The prophet Joel probably lived during the time of King Joash of Judah (see the chart in chapter 5). The Bible gives us very little information about this prophet. We do know the name of his father (Joel 1:1).

The Locust Judgment

Joel's prophecy speaks of a terrible plague of locusts which came upon the land of Palestine (Joel 1:4). The destruction that locusts can cause is almost unbelievable. They strip all crops and green vegetation. In 15 minutes they can completely strip a tree of its leaves. A Desert Locust swarm that crossed the Red Sea in 1889 was estimated to cover 2000 square miles. Such swarms are like dark clouds dense enough to hide the sun and they contain countless millions of these "grasshoppers." Because of the sins of His people, God sent these creatures as a form of judgment. As is true with all judgment, the *CAUSE* was *sin* and the *CURE* was *repentance* (Joel 2:12-14)!

An Even Greater Judgment

God used this locust judgment to point to an even greater judgment that would come in the future. Joel has much to say about this future time of judgment.

The key phrase in the book of Joel is "**the day of the LORD.**" Where do you find this phrase in chapter 1? _____ Can you find this phrase in chapter 2? _____ in chapter 3? _____ What does the book of Joel tell us about this future time of judgment?

Please MATCH the following statements about the day of the LORD with the verses. The verses can be used more than once.

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| 1. _____ | There has never been a time like it. | |
| 2. _____ | It will be a great and terrible day. | A. Joel 1:15 |
| 3. _____ | Before that great day the sun will be turned into darkness. | B. Joel 2:1 |
| 4. _____ | It will be a day of darkness and gloominess. | C. Joel 2:2 |
| 5. _____ | It will be a time of destruction from the Almighty. | D. Joel 2:11 |
| 6. _____ | It will be a day of clouds and thick darkness. | E. Joel 2:31 |
| 7. _____ | It will be a time when the land will tremble. | F. Joel 3:14-16 |
| 8. _____ | The Lord Himself will "roar out of Zion" and make a personal appearance. | |

Today God allows many things to happen that are not right. God is longsuffering (long before getting angry) and patient with sinful men. He does not judge a person immediately (by striking him dead on the spot or by hitting him with a lightning bolt) every time a person sins or tells a lie or steals. But because God lets wrong pass by for now does not mean that God will always do this. The book of Joel reminds us that there is coming a future day when God will step into the affairs of men and will personally judge this world and the people living in it. God hates sin and must judge sin!

Joel's message for sinners is that they need to get their hearts **right with God now** (Joel 2:12—turn ye even to Me with _____ your _____)! Joel 2:13 is a key verse: "And rend your _____ and not your garments, and _____ unto the LORD your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to _____ and of great kindness." For each person who turns to God with all his heart, Joel has good news (see Joel 2:14; 2:32)! Each person must choose whether he wants **bad news or good news, disaster or deliverance**. Which will it be?

Amos—The Righteousness of God

The prophet Amos was a H _____, (Amos 1:1) from the city of Tekoa. Tekoa was a city or village located about twelve miles south of Jerusalem and about six miles south of Bethlehem. Thus, Amos was a rugged shepherd who lived in the southern kingdom of Judah. He lived during the reigns of Uzziah, the king of Judah, and wicked Jeroboam II, the king of Israel (Amos 1:1; see the chart in chapter 5). Thus Amos lived at the same time as Isaiah and Hosea.

Sent as a Missionary to the Northern Kingdom

Even though Amos lived in the southern kingdom of Judah, God send him to the northern kingdom of Israel where he would give his message. He was sent to the city of Bethel which was the religious center of the northern kingdom. Bethel was a wicked center of idolatry.

The people of Bethel did not appreciate the ministry of Amos (see Amos 7:10-13)! In fact, the priest of Bethel said something like this to Amos: **Get out of here and go home** (Amos 7:12) **and don't give us God's message any more** (Amos 7:13)!

A Righteous God Must Punish Sin

We have already learned that Hosea ministered to the northern kingdom at about the same time Amos did. Hosea and Amos both spoke God's message to these people who had forsaken God. Amos strongly pointed out the sins of the people and told them that a righteous God must punish sin. Hosea, too, told of their sin, but he also reminded them of God's heart of love and of their need to return to God. Thus, Hosea spoke of God's unfailing love and Amos spoke of God's unbending righteousness!

The key verse in Amos is found in Amos 3:2: "I will _____ you for all your _____ (sins)." A righteous God can not overlook sin or ignore sin or minimize sin! A righteous God must judge sin! This is why God spoke through Amos and said to His sinful people: "Prepare to _____ thy _____, O Israel!" (Amos 4:12).

A Time of Prosperity

What was the northern kingdom like in the days of Amos? Jeroboam II was the wicked king who sat on the throne. How many years did he reign (2 Kings 14:23)? _____ This was a long reign, and during these years the people of the northern kingdom enjoyed great prosperity. They had wealth and luxury and security. There were no great wars to worry about. Everything seemed wonderful and well on the outside, but the problem was on the inside! The people had a heart problem! The people had turned away from the Lord and were living in sin and idolatry. They thought everything was wonderful and well, but along came Amos and told them that everything was terrible and that trouble and judgment were coming!

The Present is Bleak but the Future is Bright

Amos the Herdsman was not just a prophet of doom! He also had a message of hope, which is especially seen in the last verses of the book (Amos 9:11-15). This passage teaches that Israel's future king will be from the line of David (v.11), Israel will be supreme over all the nations (v.12), the land will be fruitful (v.13), cities will be rebuilt (v.14) and the nation will be permanently settled in her own land (v.15). These wonderful promises will be fulfilled when Christ returns to this earth as King! The message of Amos: ***Abused privileges bring abundant punishment!***

Obadiah—The Doom of Edom

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament: just 21 verses! The Bible tells us very little about the prophet Obadiah. His name means "servant of the Lord" and the Lord used His servant Obadiah to give us this small book with Its important message. When you think of the book of Obadiah, always think of one word: **Edom**. The first verse says, "The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning _____." This short book is about one thing: God's judgment upon Edom!

What was Edom? Edom was a nation of people. These people were the descendants of Esau. Esau was Jacob's brother. In Genesis 25:30 we learn that Esau was also called _____ (which means "red"). Esau and Jacob were twins. Esau was the elder (he came out first) and Jacob was the younger (he came out second). According to Genesis 25:23 God promised that the elder (who was this? _____) would serve the younger (who was this? _____). We also learn that Esau was more concerned about having soup than he was about having a relationship with God (Genesis 25:29-34; Hebrews 12:16). The same thing could be said about Esau's descendants. The Edomites did not care very much about having a relationship with God. In fact, century after century they were the enemies of God's people Israel!

The nation of Edom's biggest sin was that of **PRIDE**: "the _____ of thine heart hath _____ thee" (Obadiah 1:3). To understand this we need to know something about the city where these people lived. The capital of Edom was the city of Sela (later called Petra), which was located south of the Dead Sea. This city was perched high on a cliff and the only way to get to the city was through a very narrow gorge. Because of this narrow entrance and the impossibility of getting to the city any other way, only a handful of Edomite soldiers was needed to guard the city against a great army! These people felt absolutely safe and secure! They felt that it was impossible for any enemy to ever conquer them! Their "cliff-city" dwelt "in the clefts of the _____" (Obadiah 1:3) and they did not think that anyone would ever conquer them or bring them down! They thought they were invincible!

Today if you were to visit the city of Petra you would find the beautiful ruins of this cliff city. You would not find any Edomites living there! They have long since been destroyed! They thought that no one could bring them down, **but God could!** "Though thou exalt thyself as the _____ and though thou set thy nest among the _____, thence will I _____ thee _____ saith the _____." (Obadiah 4).

One of the reasons God judged this people was because of the way they treated God's people Israel (verses 10-14). These verses show us that Edom was hostile and cruel to Israel. Long ago God set forth this important principle: "And I will bless them that bless thee, and _____ him that curseth thee" (Genesis 12:3). The Edomites cursed Israel and as a result they found themselves cursed by God.

The book of Obadiah should warn believers about the dangerous sin of pride. We might do well in the Christian life and then we might take our eyes off the Lord, thinking that we will never fall! But God's Word says, "Wherefore (therefore) let him that thinketh he _____ take heed (**Watch out!**) lest he _____" (1 Cor. 10:12). Trust God, He can deliver and save (v. 21 in Obadiah—a key verse). Let's learn a lesson from the Edomites! ***That which is of the flesh will fail and fall!***