

The MINOR PROPHETS

COMING - STARTING WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2006 (all sessions at 7 P.M.):

The NEW TESTAMENT For Dummies

Wednesday, March 22 – “Between The Testaments”

Sunday, March 26 – “The Gospels”

Wednesday, March 29 – “Acts and Romans”

Sunday, April 2 – The Pauline Epistles (Letters from Paul)

Wednesday, April 5 – The Other Epistles

Sunday, April 9 – Revelation

“I prayed for faith, and I thought that some day faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, ‘Now faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.’ I had closed my Bible and prayed for Faith. I now opened my Bible and began to study, and faith has been growing ever since.”

– D. L. Moody

TONIGHT WE STUDY “THE MINOR PROPHETS.” IN ORDER OF CANON, THEY ARE: HOSEA, JOEL, AMOS, OBADIAH, JONAH, MICAH, NAHUM, HABAKKUK, ZEPHANIAH, HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, AND MALACHI. Twelve great men in all - not minor because of the impact of their ministries, but only in the length of the books left behind.

WHAT MANNER OF MAN IS THE PROPHET? “Instead of dealing with the timeless issues of being and becoming, of matter and form, of definitions and demonstrations, he is thrown into orations about widows and orphans, about the corruption of judges and affairs of the market place. Instead of showing us a way through the elegant mansions of the mind, the prophets take us to the slums. They make much ado about even paltry things if, indeed, those “paltry” things are an affront to a holy God. We find that those things that horrified the prophets were events which now take place all over the world.”

--Abraham J. Heschel

HOSEA

If I were a motion picture producer, I would ask a great writer to supply me a script taken from Hosea. His story is one of the greatest love stories ever written....of a man whose wife betrayed him again and again, who finally plummeted so far into the depths of depravity, she was sold on the auction block as a slave - a ruined, defiled woman. Yet who should come to the auction to buy her back at great price? Her husband - Hosea. It is a story for the ages!

1. Hosea was a native of Israel (northern Kingdom), not Judah. (You will note from your “chronological table of the Kings of the Divided Kingdom” that Hosea ministered roughly in the area around 750 B.C. - particularly under the horrendous administration of King Jeroboam II.
2. Hosea was called by God to prophesy to the crumbling kingdom of Israel during its last 30 or so years of existence. Within 15 years of King Jeroboam’s II death, four of Israel’s kings were assassinated and the capital of Samaria was a smoking ruin.
3. Hosea married a prostitute named Gomer – which illustrated Israel’s spiritual infidelity to God. I believe that Hosea married her when she was still a chaste virgin.

This being true, then this scripture was more prophetic than historic:

Hosea 1:2

The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord.

Yet despite Gomer’s unending unfaithfulness to her husband, Hosea never stopped loving her - and pursuing her. It is a remarkable allegory to the love of God for Israel that though she committed idolatry (which is spiritual adultery) against God, God never stopped loving her.

4. The purpose of the Book of Hosea was God’s last attempt to call Israel to repentance from her flagrant idolatry before just giving her over to Assyrian’s brutal subjugation.
5. OUTLINE: Chapters 1 - 3 describe Hosea’s marriage to Gomer. The names of their three children are prophetic signs to Israel: 1) Jezreel (“God Scatters”), 2) Lo-ruhamah (“Not Loved”), and 3) Lo-ammi (“Not My People”). Chapters 4-14 contain a series of prophecies by Hosea that parallel Israel’s unfaithfulness to that of his wife.

JOEL

The fifty days that followed our Lord's death on Calvary were spectacular ones. Three days later, Jesus rose from the grave alive forevermore. A few days later He ascended from Mount Olivet to Heaven. On the 50th day, during the annual Jewish Day of Harvest called Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured upon the 120 seeking followers of Christ on Mount Zion. They changed the world. The outpouring was so spectacular that, enroute to the Temple, people were asking, "What is it with these people?" Peter responded:

Acts 2:14-18

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: [15] For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. [16] But this is that which was spoken by **the prophet Joel**; [17] And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: [18] And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

So the book of Joel and his wondrous prophecy 800 years before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit happened on the Day of Pentecost are precious to us who are Pentecostal.

1. Calamity had befallen Judah and Jerusalem. Drought and locusts had covered the land. The people had been devastated at every level of society.

2. Joel's purpose for writing this book were:

A. To bring the people together before the Lord in a great sacred assembly

Joel 1:14

Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord,

Joel 2:15-16

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: [16] Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders,

B. To exhort (encourage) the people to repent and humbly return to the Lord God with fasting, weeping, mourning and intercession for God's mercy.

C. To prophecy happier times ahead, including the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

3. The outline of Joel is as follows:

A. Section one (1:2-20) describes the devastation of Judah from the locusts

B. Section two (2:1-17) records the imminence of an even greater judgment of God from the north

C. Section three (2:18 - 3:21) declares that God has pity on His people when they truly repent.

The fastest-growing spiritual phenomenon in the world today is NOT Islam. It is NOT the Roman Catholic Church. It is the Pentecostals! It is conservatively estimated that today - early 2006 - there are between 500 million and 600 million Pentecostal people in the world and that figure is growing so rapidly that within the next decade it could hit the one billion mark! Think of it! The prophecy Joel made about 800 B.C., began to happen in remarkable fashion on the Day of Pentecost:

Acts 2:1-4

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. [2] And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. [3] And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. [4] And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

No matter how hard Satan and his cohorts fought this sovereign move of God, he was unable to dislodge in humanity what the Holy Spirit had begun. At the outbreak of the 20th century, about 105 years ago, the fire broke out once again. Today well over a half billion people are seeing the result of Joel's remarkable prophecy.

A M O S

1. Amos was an 8th century BC prophet, a contemporary of Isaiah and Micah in Judah. He lived and ministered at roughly the same time period as his counterparts Jonah and Hosea in the northern kingdom of Israel.

2. Amos was a herdsman from the village of Tekoah. Standing on the Herodian, east of Bethlehem, one can look to the west almost straight down on this little town that still exists today. At this point in history, Israel (the northern Kingdom) had only a couple of decades of existence remaining.

3. Strange, but the closer to oblivion she got, the more prosperous Israel became. “Who needs God?” was the derisive dismissal to any prophet. The people rejected out-of-hand Amos’ cry, “Repent or Perish!” The prophet was expelled from the northern country and returned to Judah and committed his message (the book of Amos) to writing. His hope was to get a copy to wicked King Jeroboam II in Israel and to spread the message to the common man there as well. Israel’s primary sins included idolatry, immorality and injustice.

4. Outline:

A. Section 1 (1:3 - 2:16), Amos addresses his message of judgment to seven nations surrounding the land of Israel, including Judah.

B. Section 2 (3:1-6:14) records three bold messages. In the first, God indicts Israel for forsaking His Word - even after all He had done for them.

In the second message, God indicted Israel for misuse of her great wealth

In the third message, God promises terrible ruin and retribution, “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion” (6:1).

C. In the third and major section (7:1-9:10) records five prophetic visions of Amos about God’s approaching judgment. The book closes with a powerful message of future restoration for the survivors of the coming cataclysm.

O B A D I A H

1. God made a promise to Abraham (Abram, as he was then called) when He commanded him to leave Ur of Chaldea and journey to a far country he knew not of. And this was that promise:

Genesis 12:1-3

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: [2] And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: [3] And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

This tiny one-chapter book of Obadiah shows how God meant business. Over 1100 years later, about 800 B.C., God told Obadiah to prophesy against the land of Edom (the land southeast of the Dead Sea (Petra) and say He was now going to repay the Edomites for their shabby treatment of the Jews when they were going to the Promised Land from Egypt.

Edomites were the descendants of Esau but were always bitter enemies of the Jews. They had refused passage to the Israelites:

Numbers 20:14-21

And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us: [15] How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers: [16] And when we cried unto the Lord, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and, behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border: [17] Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's high way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders. [18] And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. [19] And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the high way: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it: I will only, without doing any thing else, go through on my feet. [20] And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. [21] Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him.

Not only had the Edomites turned Israel away, costing them months of travel time and exposure to danger, but they would at times raid their enemies, causing death and destruction. They, in fact, had plundered Jerusalem four times - under the reigns of Jehoram, Amaziah, Ahaz and Zedekiah. Now, through Obadiah, God told the Edomites it was time to pay the cost for their ill treatment of the Jews.

Obadiah prophesied that the Edomites would be cut off forever. Within 4 years after Jerusalem was burned by Babylon, Edom was raided and desolated by the very same Babylonians they had cheered against Israel.

Obadiah 1:15-18

For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head. [16] For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been.

[17] But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. [18] And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of

the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken it.

J O N A H

1. Many times during the war in Iraq, we have watched the network news to see action near the Iraqi town of Mosul in the northern part of the country. Just one mile east across the Tigris River lie the ruins of ancient Nineveh. In Jonah 3:3, Nineveh is called “an exceedingly great city.” Understatement! Archeologists have learned from the city’s walls, temples, palaces, inscriptions and reliefs - even in their ruined condition - how magnificent this city was. We believe that in Jonah’s time, Nineveh was a city of about 600,000 population.

2. Long before Jonah’s time, Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrians, had a reputation for being ruthless and cruel.

King Ashurnasirpal II (883 BC): *“I stormed the mountain peaks and took them. In the midst of the mighty mountain I slaughtered them, with their blood I dyed the mountain red like wool. With the rest of them I darkened the gullies and precipices of the mountains. I carried off their possessions. The heads of their warriors I cut off, and I formed them into a pillar over against their city, their young men and their maidens I burned in the fire.”*

3. God had decided to destroy Nineveh and told Jonah to go to that wicked city and warn its inhabitants. Jonah did not want to go because he figured the people would repent and God would relent and not destroy the city. Jonah wanted the Ninevites dead! He hated them! Or - if they went the other way and did not repent, they would probably cut off his head. It was a “tails you win, heads you lose” deal, as far as Jonah was concerned.

4. Instead of going overland northeast to Nineveh, Jonah decided to cut and run and go west by ship across the Mediterranean Sea to Tarshish, a resort areas in Spain. He went to Israel’s port city of Joppa (the south side of current-day Tel Aviv) and booked his passage. However, once out to sea, a violent storm threatened the ship and the sailors threw the disobedient prophet into the water where he was swallowed by a “great fish.” Several days later, still alive, but barely, he repented of his disobedience and the whale spit him out.

Nineveh’s repentance in response to Jonah’s preaching most likely occurred during the reign of one of two Assyrian monarchs: 1) Adad-nirari III (810-783 BC) whose reign was marked by a return to monotheism (one-god), or 2) AshurdanII (783-755 BC)

whose reign experienced two major plagues and an eclipse of the sun.

5. In chapter 4, we learn of Jonah's complaint against God for sparing this enemy of Israel. Using a gourd, a work and an east wind, God taught His angry prophet that He delights in making His grace available to everyone, not just to Israel and Judah.

OUTLINE

1. God's first call (1:1-2:10)
2. God's second call (3:1-4:11) and the cost of disobeying Him

MICAH

1. Not only is the history of Micah's prophecy of fascination to Bible students, but its future telling of Messiah being born in Bethlehem is of prime importance:

Matthew 2:1-6

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, [2] Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. [3] When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. [4] And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. [5] And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet (that prophet was Micah), [6] And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

2. Micah ministered in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. You will see from the chart (Kings of the Divided Kingdom) that Jotham and Hezekiah were good monarchs while Ahaz was extremely wicked.

3. Micah's message was to both Israel and Judah, addressed primarily to their respective capitals, Samaria and Jerusalem. His prophecy addressed 1) their sins; 2) their future destruction; and 3) their ultimate restoration.

4. The book is basically outlined as follows:

1. Judgement against Israel and Judah (1:1 - 3:12)
2. Prophetic Message of Hope (4:1 - 5:15)
3. God's Lawsuit Against Israel and His Final Mercy (6:1 - 7:20)

5. Micah's home was the small town of Moresheth-gath (near the Philistine city of Gath), a productive agriculture area 25-30 miles southwest of Jerusalem. He raised against Judah's corrupt leaders, false prophets, ungodly priests, dishonest merchants and bribed judges.

N A H U M

1. Jonah and Nahum had one thing in common: Nineveh. Jonah came first to Nineveh with his message to "repent" which resulted in revival. Nahum came almost a century later and his message was "destruction."

2. Very little is known about Nahum. Some early scholars believed the prophet lived in the village later known as Capernaum (K'fer/Nahum), which means "village of Nahum."

3. After Jonah's ministry in Nineveh, the Assyrians repented of their sins but sometime thereafter returned to their wicked ways. Nahum warned them that judgment was now a sure thing.

4. The book contains three separate oracles against Assyria, especially the capital city of Nineveh. Within 20 - 30 years of this prophecy, an army of Babylonians and Medes closed in on the city. It all came to pass precisely as Nahum had predicted. Nineveh's destruction was so complete that even its site was forgotten. ***Critics of the Bible began to claim that there never was such a city! But in the early 1800's, Claude James Rich spent extensive time on the site, claiming there was a massive ancient city beneath the sand and rock. Twenty years later, under Layard, excavations began successfully.***

H A B A K K U K

1. Sometime around 625 B.C., the Babylonians were sweeping the known nations with their massive armies. They had not yet reached Judah and Jerusalem. The prophet Habakkuk had an argument with God that Judah should not perish at the hands of the Babylonians because "they were the chosen people." Habakkuk's question to God was, "How can you use a more wicked nation than Judah as an instrument of Your judgment?" God's response was that He would also judge Babylon in His time.

2. Habakkuk 2:4 became the great rallying cry for Martin Luther and the Reformation 500 years ago: “The just shall live by faith!”

3. Habakkuk’s purpose in writing this book was not to talk to the ungodly of Judah, but rather to bring understanding and comfort to the Godly remnant. Having himself wrestled with the profoundly disturbing problem of God’s using a deplorably wicked people like the Babylonians to swallow up His people in Judgment, the prophet assures fellow believers that God will deal with all wickedness at the appointed time. Til then, **THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH**, not by how they felt nor by their own concepts of what should happen.

4. The Outline:

1. The Question of Habakkuk (1:2 - 2:20)
2. The Song of Habakkuk (3:1 - 19)

5. Final note: Habakkuk’s declaration that the just shall live by faith (2:4) is the key Old Testament verse used by Paul in his theology of justification by faith.

ZEPHANIAH

1. Zephaniah prophesied in the days of good King Josiah of Judah in the early 600's BC. In fact, the prophet was the great, great grandson of Hezekiah and hence related to Josiah as well. Josiah ruled after the reign of Manasseh, arguably the most despicable of all Jewish kings, and brought about excellent reformation in his nation. Zephaniah was very instrumental in that move toward God. However, God knew that the “paradise” was to be short-lived and within a few decades disaster would strike Judah.

2. The sins that Zephaniah cites in his prophecy indicate that the book was written prior to Josiah’s ascent to the throne. It was not until the 12th year of Josiah’s reign (627 B.C.) That the king set out to purge the nation of idolatry and to reinstitute the true worship of the Lord. Eight years later (619 B.C.), King Josiah ordered the repair and purification of Solomon’s Temple during which time a copy of the Torah was discovered (2 Kings 22:1-10).

3. For the most part, the book is a sober warning about the coming day of God’s judgments for sin. Zephaniah foresaw a worldwide judgment coming for the sins of all humanity (1:2 3:8), but he especially focused on the judgment coming on Judah.

4. Jesus may have alluded to Zephaniah twice (1:2-3, cf. Matt 13:40-42 and 1:15, cf. Matt. 24:29), both references associated with Jesus' second coming. New Testament writers understood Zephaniah's message about "the day of the Lord" as a description of future events that begin with the great tribulation and conclude with Jesus' return to judge the living and the dead.

H A G G A I

We come now to "post-exile" prophecies, that is, the prophets followed the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity. There are three of these "post-exilic" prophets: Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

1. Some scholars believe that Haggai could have been one of a small handful of exiles who returned to resettle Jerusalem who had lived there in his early years and could even remember Solomon's Temple before it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's army in 586 B.C. If that is the case, Haggai would have been probably in his 80's when he wrote. The book is dated precisely in the second year of King Darius of Persia:

Haggai 1:1

In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest...

2. It is essential in understanding this writing that you remember the setting:

In 538 B.C. King Cyrus of Persia issued a decree permitting the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. The first company of Jews to return to Jerusalem laid the foundation for a new temple amid great excitement 50 years after its destruction. However, soon afterwards the Samaritans and other neighbors physically opposed the building project and discouraged the workers so that the work on the temple stopped in 534 B.C. Terrible lethargy - spiritually, mentally and physically - now beset the returnees. Haggai, accompanied by the younger prophet Zechariah, began urging Zerubbabel and the people to resume building. Four years later the temple was completed and dedicated (see Ezra 4-6) exactly 70 years after its destruction.

3. During a 4 month period in 520 B.C., Haggai delivered the four messages recorded in this little book:

1. The first message: Finish building the Temple (1:1-15)
2. The second message: The Promise of Greater Glory (2:1-9)
3. The third message: The Call to Holiness with Blessing (2:10-19)
4. The third message: A prophetic Promise (2:20-23)

Haggai 2:20-23

And again the word of the Lord came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, [21] Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; [22] And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. [23] In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.

Z E C H A R I A H

1. Remember that Zechariah was a younger co-contemporary with Haggai.
2. Zechariah's prophecy concerned 1) rebuilding the Temple; 2) Forecasts of the grander future Temple; 3) Visions of the coming Messiah; and 4) The coming Universal Kingdom of God.

3. Zechariah was greatly used of the Lord in stirring up the post-exile Jews to resume building the temple. All of his prophecies occurred in Jerusalem for the 50,000 or so Jewish exiles who had returned to Judah from Babylon in the first stage of the restoration.

4. According to New Testament scripture, Zechariah was later murdered in Jerusalem:
Matthew 23:35

That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

5. Outline:

1. Part One: Prophetic Words in the Context of Rebuilding the Temple (520-518 B.C.) (1:1-8:23)
2. Part Two: Prophetic Words Concerning Israel and the Coming Messiah (9:1-14:21)

6. A particularly stunning couple of passages thrill this instructor:
Acts 1:9-11

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. [10] And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; [11] Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Zech. 14:3-4

Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

[4] And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

I fully intend to be present and with the Lord when He returns to this earth and alights on Mount Olivet once again.

M A L A C H I

1. Malachi was a post-exile prophet of God and a contemporary of Nehemiah.

2. When he wrote this prophecy, the post-exilic Jews in the Holy Land were again experiencing adversity and spiritual decline. Because of their situation, the people doubted God's provision and had become hard and cynical. Their worship of the Lord became mechanical and insensitive. So Malachi confronted both the priests and the people with the charge to 1) Repent of their attitudes and religious hypocrisy and to 2) remove the obstacles of disobedience that were blocking God's favor.

3. The book consists of a 6-fold burden of the word of the Lord intermingled with a series of ten rhetorical and very sarcastic questions by Israel and God's response to them through Malachi.

4. Outline:

1. The Burden of the Lord and Israel's Questions (1:2-3:18)

2. The Day of the Lord (4:1-6)

4. Malachi's teaching on offerings and tithes are vital to the success of the church:

Malachi 3:10

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.