

Old Testament Core Seminar

Introduction

Good morning. Today we will breach another distinct section of the Old Testament. Today we begin a study of what are called the *Minor Prophets*. Turn to the table of contents in your Bible. Do you see where Isaiah is? From Isaiah on, are what are called *The Prophets*. The Prophets, in turn are divided into two sections. The *Major Prophets*, and the *Minor Prophets*. The Major Prophets consist of Isaiah through Daniel. And the Minor Prophets are Hosea through the end of the Old Testament. Does anyone know why some are called “Major,” and others are called “Minor” Prophets? [WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO ANSWER] It’s not because some are more important than others – like the way you have the major and minor leagues in baseball. Rather, it really has to do with length. The Major Prophets are, generally speaking, longer. Further, the Minor Prophets have traditionally been associated together, such that they are often referred to as one book, called “The Book of the Twelve.” I guess you could look at the Minor Prophets like the Books of Moses: five distinct books, but often taken and considered together as one complete work.

At any rate, we begin our study of the Minor Prophets, the Book of the Twelve, today. They are not strictly chronological in they’re ordering. It’s really hard to tell what exactly the rational behind their ordering is. It’s most likely thematic/theological. But scholars disagree on what the thematic/theological connections exactly are.¹ At any rate, they are *roughly* chronological. The first six, Hosea through Micah, are set prior to the fall of the Northern Kingdom, Israel (which occurred in 722 BC). The next three, Nahum through Zephaniah, are set prior to the fall of the Southern Kingdom, Judah (587 BC). And the final three, Haggai through Malachi, are set after the Southern Kingdom’s return from exile (536 BC). We, of course, will look at them as we have every other book in the Old Testament: as they fit into redemptive-history. Today: Hosea and Joel.

[PRAY]

HOSEA

Context

The book of Hosea was written by the prophet Hosea. You can see there in chapter 1, verse 1 that Hosea preached during from the reign of Uzziah up to the time of Hezekiah, in the South. This makes Hosea a contemporary of Isaiah. Jeroboam is the only Northern king mentioned, though Hosea prophesized while others were king, perhaps even right up to the time that the North fell. This places Hosea’s ministry during the mid to late 8th century BC. It was a time of great economic prosperity, and the people had slipped into worshipping Baal, instead of

¹ Paul House suggests that the theological connection is this: Hosea – Micah are mostly concerned with covenant breaking; Nahum – Zephaniah are mostly concerned with the Day of the LORD; and Haggai – Malachi are mostly concerned with the future hope. [note to self: double check that it is indeed House where you got this...]

Yahweh, or perhaps together with Yahweh, because they thought Baal was the one who gave them that prosperity.

The focus of attention is on the Northern Kingdom. Like an adulterous wife, Israel has broken the covenant with Yahweh. Now Yahweh is angry and is ready to cast Israel off from being His people (cf. 1:6-9)! Do you remember in the book of Exodus how Yahweh called Israel “My People?” Well, now He is ready to call them “Not My People.” It is a sad prophecy that Hosea brings, but we’ll see that it will also be mixed with grace.

Theme

With all the poetry and apocalyptic language, it’s very easy to get lost in these Minor Prophets. But here is a general outline that fits them all: Indictment for sins, Judgment, and then Grace. Having those bearings like that can really help you not get lost in some of the often complex details of the text. The Prophets recite the sins of the people, then threaten judgment if they won’t repent, but always end on grace because Yahweh is a covenantly faithful God keeping lovingkindness towards the people to whom He has promised to be their God.

More particularly for Hosea, a thematic might sound like this:

The people of Israel have broken the covenant like an adulterous wife, even though Yahweh has been a faithful husband to them.

One interesting thing we are going to see in the prophets is their use of everyday things to symbolize greater religious truths. What I mean is this: Hosea is told to marry a harlot, who then commits adultery. Then Hosea is told to take her back, and she commits adultery again. And so on. Well, this little episode is meant to symbolize what has been going on for generations on a greater scale: Israel has been playing the harlot by worshipping other gods, but Yahweh has always been a faithful and forgiving husband, taking Israel back time and again. The prophets love to use such symbolism, and then explain that symbolism. We’ll see it over and over again. At any rate, the point here in Hosea is that Yahweh’s patience has run out, and it is time for Israel to endure her covenant curse. *Nonetheless*, as mentioned, grace will *still* be held out, and the book will end in hope.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

[This outline does not need to be gone over. The class only needs to be told that it is printed in their handouts so that they could have a little guide for their own study.]

Outline w/ Pivotal Texts

- I. Hosea 1:1-3:5 – Hosea’s Adulterous Wife, Gomer
 - A. Accusation, Judgment, and Mercy* 1:2-2:1
 - B. Accusation, Judgment, and Mercy 2:2-23
 - C. Accusation, Judgment, and Mercy ch. 3

- II. Hosea 4:1-14:9 – Yahweh’s Adulterous Wife, Israel
 - A. Accusation, Judgment, and Mercy 4:1-6:3

- B. Accusation, Judgment, and Mercy 6:4-11:11
- C. Accusation, Judgment, and Mercy 11:12-14:9

*Notice that each section has an internal structure of accusation, then judgment, and then mercy. One can notice this in the text by some key words. Phrases like “bring charges,” “rebuke,” “plead with,” and “contend with” demark the beginning of the charges. Phrases like “blow the horn,” and “sound the trumpet” demark the beginning of the judgment in the second half of the book. And phrases like “yet,” “afterward,” and other such transition words, “I will return,” “I will go back,” and “return O Israel” demark the beginning of the mercy.

Theme texts

Hosea 1-3

Hosea banks on **two very powerful images** to get his message across. The first is a marriage. There is no greater symbol of love and commitment than a marriage. Hosea reminds us that Israel is in a covenant relationship with Yahweh akin to a marriage. That love, commitment, and devotion should be present, and it certainly is on Yahweh’s end. However, secondly, Hosea also uses the image of adultery to describe the relationship between Israel and Yahweh. Few things are as universally recognized to be as great an evil as adultery is. Well, to drive his message home about how treacherous and evil Israel’s rebellion is, Hosea calls them *adulterous*. And as mentioned, Hosea himself is told by Yahweh to marry a harlot and receive her back after she commits adultery against her, in order to embody and symbolize the relationship between Yahweh and His people. He is always faithful and forgiving, but Israel has always played the harlot. Look at **chapter 1, verse 2**. [READ]

You can read more about Hosea’s relationship with Gomer, his immoral wife, and what it says about Israel, in chapters 1-3. As you do, notice that each chapter ends with grace and mercy. Despite Israel’s treachery, Yahweh is covenantally committed. As mentioned, the prophets always end on grace.

Before we move on though, I want to point out one particular text. Look at **chapter 1, verse 9**. [READ] This is a sad moment. Hosea is told to name his son “Lo-Ammi,” which means “Not My People.” The point here is that Israel is called “Not My People” by Yahweh! He is casting them off! But, look at the very next verse. [READ VESRE 10] Yahweh will marry them again! And look at **verse 11**. [READ] Here Hosea is even prophesizing that Israel and Judah will be reunited, and that they will have One ruler over them. Hm. Who could that be? In Romans 9:23ff we read this: ²³ What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory-- ²⁴ even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵ As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," ²⁶ and, "It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

What Paul is saying is that the great restoration from exile, here predicted by Hosea, includes the Gentiles, wrought by Christ on the cross! Jesus Christ’s life, ministry, death and resurrection are the true return from exile, to where people are again reconciled to God. Not only Israel, but all of us are estranged from God because of our sins, and we all deserve to be cast away from His presence for eternity. But Jesus Christ has assuaged that wrath of God, and

brings us back into fellowship with him. The exile and return of Israel in history was a type, a foreshadow, of that greater and climactic truth in Christ. And praise be to God, for this salvation is not only for Israel, but for *all* who would ever repent and give their lives to Jesus in faith, regardless of ethnicity. Peter says the same thing in his first letter. **1 Peter 2:9-10** ⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

How great a salvation! No wonder we praise Him!

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

Hosea 4-14

Chapters 1 through 3 really embody **the rest of the book**. Hosea's relationship with Gomer is left behind, and the focus goes entirely to Israel and Yahweh. But again, you'll notice in the outline on the back of your handout, that there are three sections of accusation, judgment, and mercy. Always ending on mercy. Look at **chapter 9, verses 8-9**. [READ] Praise the LORD, what an amazing picture of His lovingkindness and gentleness toward sinners.

Psalm 103:9-14 ⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. ¹³ As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; ¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

And again we return to **the gospel**. How can He have grace on sinners, which Hosea teaches, and still uphold His righteousness and be just, as Hosea also teaches? Well, it's a great mystery until we understand the cross. For there God reconciled His justice and His grace without compromising either one. If this intrigues you, just read Romans 3:21-26 this afternoon, and marvel, like Paul does, at God's great wisdom in how He can do that.

A word of application before leaving Hosea. The first, of course, is the call to **trust in the Lord Jesus Christ**. Your sins have made a separation between you and God. Only through His death and resurrection are we healed and reconciled to God.

Secondly, we need to **see sin the way God sees sin**. Disobeying the LORD is no minor, inconsequential thing we often pretend it is. It's *adultery*! The New Testament tells us this too. James 4:4 says, "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." So we are to be wholly devoted to our God, and we as a church need to think deeply about how we can help each other keep away from befriending the world in this way. And then when we stumble, as we all do, we are to lift each other up, and remind each other to glory in The LORD's compassion and grace. Look at **Hosea 6:1-2**. [READ]

The question might then become, **why obey** the LORD if we know He'll just forgive us anyway? *Many* answers could be given for this. Let's just look at how Hosea ends his book.

Look at **chapter 14, verse 9**. [READ] The ways of the Yahweh are right. They cause the righteous to walk, and the rebellious to stumble. You want to walk and not stumble don't you? You want to be wise don't you? Then don't enflame the anger of the LORD, and don't presume upon His grace. Walk in His ways. But when you fail, as we all do, there is a Redeemer who forgives. Praise the LORD!

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

JOEL

Context

Turn now to the next book in your Bible, Joel. The author is the prophet Joel. We don't know exactly when Joel prophesized, because he doesn't tell which king was reigning at the time. But based on the language and vocabulary, scholars suspect that it is one of the earliest writing prophets. That would put the writing of Joel in early 8th century BC, some say even into the 9th century BC.² And that's really just about all we know about the historical context.

Redemptive-Historically Joel is similar to Hosea, in that he prophesized after the division of the kingdom, but before the North's fall. The only difference would be that Joel prophesizes to the Southern Kingdom, Judah. What makes Joel *really* distinct though is his intense focus on the end of the world.

Theme

A thematic for Joel is:

The Day of the LORD is prefigured in a locust plague, and in an invading army.

In Joel we learn a lot more about what the Day of the LORD is. And just like Hosea did, Joel also points to the things of this world as symbols of representation that embody his message. Joel points to two historical events, a locust plague and an invading army, to say that if the people of God will not repent, then this locust plague and invading army are foretastes of greater judgment and worse disasters to come. And that is what the Day of the LORD will be: judgment and wrath upon the unrepentant.

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Outline w/ Pivotal Texts

- I. Joel 1:1-2:17 – The Day of the LORD in Judgment
 - A. The Call to Lament 1:1-2:11
 - B. The Call to Repent 2:12-17
- II. Joel 2:18-3:21 – The Day of the LORD in Grace
 - A. The Promise of Salvation 2:18-32

² On the other hand, some say Joel is as late as Ezekiel, at the end of the 7th/beginning of the 6th century BC. That, of course, would mean that the Babylonian army is what is here prophesied, and this is after the North's fall.

B. The Promise of Restoration* 3:1-21

*Notice the gospel flow of thought through the book: lamentation over sin followed by repentance from sin result in salvation and a restored relationship with God.

Theme texts

Joel 1:1-2:11

The Day of the LORD is explicitly mentioned in Joel more than any other book. But what *is* the Day of the LORD? It is a future expectation that is found, mainly, in the prophets where they are looking forward to a one time event in the future where Yahweh will descend onto the earth, judge His people's enemies, vindicate His people, and recreate the entire universe and establishing peace, with His people at the head of the nations. There are too many texts to reference for this, but Isaiah 13, Amos 5, and Zephaniah 1 should be enough to start with.

Regardless, we should be able to learn enough about it right here in Joel. Turn to **Joel 1**, and let's see how he uses those historical symbols I just mentioned to prefigure the Day of the LORD. Look at **verse 4**. [READ] And look at **verses 5-6**. [READ] The terror that is coming upon the land is getting worse. A locust plague in verse 4 is bad enough, but then there is an army in verse 6. All this serves as a warning to the people. If they won't repent, then grater woes will come upon them, this time in the form of that great Day of the LORD I just mentioned. Look at **verse 15**. [READ] It's as though the locusts and the invading army are *mini* Days of the LORD, whereas *the* Day of the LORD is terribly worse. Look at **Joel 2:10-11**. [READ]

Joel 2:12-17

But is there any hope to escape this end-of-time-judgment, this cataclysmic catastrophe? Yes. Look at **the next verse**. [READ CHAPTER 2, VERSES 12 THROUGH 14] The way of escape is repentance. The people must *turn back* to Yahweh. Isn't that interesting. Yahweh is the One bringing the destruction, yet He is also their only hope for safety! Well, of course. Who else can protect from God's wrath but God? Who could possibly withstand Him and deliver. Only Him!

And so once again, we are driven back to **the gospel**. Only Jesus Christ, who is fully man *and* fully God, can possibly save sinners from God's own wrath. It is such folly to think that there could potentially be multiple paths to God that bypass the Lord Jesus Christ. For who else, other than the God incarnate, could possibly assuage the wrath of God and bring us to Him?

Joel 2:18-32

This repentance is now followed by salvation for the penitent. And it's interesting to see the LORD's motive for why He saves them. Look at verse 17. [READ] Joel is concerned that the nations will mock the LORD if His people are destroyed. Therefore, to vindicate His own glory, look at the very **next verse**. [READ VERSE 18] Concern for His name, fame, and global recognition, Yahweh saves His people. Look at **verse 25**. [READ] And the purpose for this salvation, just like in the Exodus, is found in **verse 28**. [READ]

So what we are seeing here is that the Day of the LORD is a day of wrath and punishment for some, and a day of salvation and vindication for others. For those who rebel against Yahweh it is a time of reckoning and justice. For those who repent and gladly submit to Him, it is a day of mercy and joy.

Joel 3

Chapter three goes on to describe how Israel and Judah will be restored in their relationship with Yahweh, never again to taste the bitter fruits of sin again. And the whole universe is renewed as well. Look at **Joel 3:18**. [READ] That is eschatological language of peace and affluence.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

Joel 2:28-32

Let's now look at one passage in Joel before we conclude. Look at **Joel 2:28-32**. Notice the outpouring of the Spirit and the emphasis on salvation as I read. [READ] So the Day of the LORD will be accompanied by the Spirit, not to mention these great signs.

Now, for the question of the hour: When *did* this take place? That's right, I asked when *did* it take place? Turn to **Acts, chapter 2**. Look at **verses 1 through 4**. [READ] This was about 7 weeks after Jesus' resurrection. And listen to how Peter interprets what's going on. Look at **verse 14**. [READ THROUGH VERSE 16] What now follows is a quotation of the verses that we just read from Joel 2. Peter is saying that the Day of the LORD has arrived! The great end-times Spirit is poured out and all who will now call upon the name of the LORD will be saved. Today is the day of salvation for all who repent, Peter is saying.

Are you confused? What about **the wonders in the heavens**, the signs on the earth, the darkening of the sun? Where's all that? Well, turn now to **Matthew 27:45-52**. [READ] That is an account of Jesus' death! What we are seeing here is that that the Day of the LORD came crashing down upon Jesus. He bore that day of wrath on behalf of His people, those who call upon Him. Now they receive the eschatological Spirit to live in this day of salvation.

One last question, in case you're not confused enough. What about the re-creation of the universe? Surely *that* hasn't happened yet, has it? No, it has not. That truly *is* an end of the world event, which still lies ahead. You see what is going on here is that there are multiple horizons of fulfillment for this Day of the LORD. For some, the Day of God's wrath has already come when Christ was crucified. They are those who call upon Him; they are those who are given the Holy Spirit. But for everyone else, their Day of the LORD, the Day of His wrath, still lie ahead. Theirs is still future. That will be when Jesus Himself returns to consummate all things, bringing with Him judgment for the unrepentant and a new universe for His people.

It's as though we are *currently* in the Day of the LORD. It has already dawned in God's first visit to earth, awaiting it's completion when He comes again.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-5 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you,² for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.³ While

people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵ You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

I hope that you noticed all the ramifications for **evangelism** here in Joel. (1) We need to remember to be clear that *a day of reckoning* is coming. Those found without a savior on that day will not stand. (2) But the good news is that Jesus died to absorb *His own* wrath. (3) And now in order to be saved one must *repent* and *call upon* the name of Jesus in faith. (4) We need to remember that conversion happens only in *the power of the Holy Spirit*, as we just saw. (5) And lastly, turn back to **Joel 3:16-17**. [READ] Did you hear that there in verse 17? The goal of salvation is not only the escape the coming wrath, but to *know the LORD!* The goal is not just to get out of hell. The goal is to know Him, and be with Him forever. Is that your hope? Is that why you've fled to Jesus? If your motivation for calling upon the name of the LORD is only to be spared from eternal torment, then you might well not be saved. For it takes no supernatural work of the Holy Spirit to cause someone to fear hell. But to love the Lord Jesus Christ more than even the breath in one's lungs (cf. Luke 14:26), now *that* is a *real* conversion! Do you love Jesus even more than your own life? Do you want to know Him? Do you want to be with Him? Well, praise Him, because He has made a way: by absorbing the Day of the LORD's wrath on behalf of those who call on Him in this sort of love! (6) And lastly, it must always be remembered that God's motivation for saving sinners is *His own glory*. He is exalted and held in awe in our hearts when we think about how great a salvation this is!

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

Conclusion

Well, we've completed the first two books of the Minor Prophets today. I hope you got a sense of the Yahweh indignation against sin, and then also His great wisdom in preparing a way for us to experience mercy and grace even in the midst of that indignation. All praise to His Son, Jesus Christ, in that "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12)."

[PRAY]