



Walking Thru The Bible HOSEA, JOEL, and AMOS

HOSEA

Hosea, from the northern Kingdom, was given a message for Israel to whom he characteristically referred by the name of its leading tribe, Ephraim (4:17; 5:3,5, etc). He preached to his own people for half a century or more about 760-710 BC (1:1).

Hosea's ministry is set against the background of a terrible tragic family life which God used as a lesson for the people (ch. 1-3). His wife Gomer forsook him and committed adultery with many lovers. Hosea continued to love her and eventually bought her back out of slavery. His experiences with Gomer illustrated God's relationship with Israel. He is remembered as the Prophet who demonstrates God's love.

Hosea accused the whole nation of Israel of spiritual adultery (4:1-19), and emphasized God's willingness to forgive them.

Overview of the Book of Hosea

The book begins with an account of Gomer's unfaithfulness (1:1-11) which symbolized Israel's unfaithfulness. The names Hosea gave to Gomer's three children expressed God's judgment of the nation: Jezreel = scattered by God; Loruhamah = not pitted; and Loammi = not my people.

Details of Gomer's adultery are given in 2:1-14, and her relationship to Hosea is described in 2:14 - 3:5.

The remainder of the book is a direct application of the Word of God to Israel. The nation is indicted for its many sins (4:1 - 7:16) and told of the punishment which was to come (8:1 - 10:15). There was still hope, however, for God's love for the nation was still real (11:1 - 14:9).

Spiritual Adultery

God's relationship to Old Testament Israel was frequently symbolized as a husband-wife relationship (Isa. 62:5; Jer. 3:14). Thus it was appropriate to represent the nation's sins-- especially idolatry-- as adultery (Hosea 4:13b-19).

The New Testament warns us about sinning against God's love (James 4:4; cf. Ephesians 5:22-33).

JOEL

Joel is nowhere dated in terms of a king's reign or a historical event whose date is known to us. The book belongs to about the 9th century BC, a time when the enemies of the Jews were Philistia, Edom, Egypt, and Phoenicia. Its early place in the sequence of prophetic books also indicates an early date.

Joel was from Judah and prophesied to his own countrymen warning them of the coming "day of the Lord" (1:15; 2:1-2; 3:1; cf. 2:15, 23, 32). The book has been called a "literary gem" because of its fluent and polished style.

A terrible locust plague and drought gave the occasion for Joel's prophecy (1:2, 17-20). We often remember Joel as the prophet of Pentecost because of 2:28-32 (cf. Acts 2:17-20).

Overview of the Book of Joel

Joel describes the terror of a real locust plague suffered by Judah which foreshadowed the day of the Lord for that nation (2:1-11). Joel pleads for repentance (2:12-17) and looked to the blessings of deliverance and prosperity which would follow if the people turned (2:18-27). He closes with God's promise to bless mankind through the outpouring of His Spirit (2:28-32). The great blessings to result from that event are described prophetically (3:1-21).

The Day of the Lord

"The Day of the Lord" is an important theme which runs through several prophetic books (Isa. 2:12f; Ezek. 13:5; Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:7,14; Zech. 14:1).

In both the Old Testament and the New Testament this expression relates to the Biblical doctrine of God's judgment. In the O.T. it is that day when a nation receives its just due for sin. There was no one specific day on which this would occur for all nations. Each nation, as announced by different prophets, was judged at a time chosen by God.

The day of the Lord was not only for Israel and Judah but also Babylon (Isa. 13:6), Egypt (Jer. 46:10), and other nations (Joel 3:14). The ultimate "day of the Lord," foreshadowed by all other times of judgment in history, is the final Judgment before Christ (cf. 2 Peter 3:10-12, 2 Cor. 5:10).

AMOS

Amos was a herdsman from the southern nation of Judah that was called by God to go up and preach against the sins of the northern kingdom, Israel. Jeroboam, the first northern king, had established the worship of the golden calves at Dan and at Bethel. Amos appeared at one of their services at Bethel and spoke out.

The herdsman-prophet went up to Bethel and by inspiration announced God's coming judgment upon the nations surrounding Israel for all their sins and crimes. He got the ear of the people as they probably uttered "Amen" to his sermon, and "Preach on brother!" But then the prophet stopped "preaching" and started "meddling" talking about the sins of Israel.

Israel was at the peak of its prosperity but had reached bottom spiritually, and was morally corrupt and decadent.

Overview of the Book of Amos

Amos announced God's judgment against Israel's neighbors (1:1 - 2:3). He then turns to Judah (2:4-5) and Israel (2:6-16). Details about Israel's specific sins and its impending judgment are related (3:1 - 6:14).

Amos was then given five visions of the coming judgment of Israel: the locust plague, the devouring fire, the plumb line, a basket of summer fruit, and the altar (ch. 7-9).

In the course of the visions, a priest of the altar at Bethel, Amaziah, rises up in opposition to Amos (7:10-17). The book ends with a glimpse of the splendor of the Messianic age (9:11-15).

The Social Conscience of the People of God

Amos was a fiery prophet who evaluated people's religion through their conduct in society. Surrounding nations were condemned because of their wickedness and cruelty to others (1:1-2:3). The rulers of Israel were denounced as thieves, and their wives as lazy, greedy, and oppressing the poor. (3:9-4:3).

In Amos' preaching the abuse of the poor is denounced severely (5:10-12). The N.T. has similar warning for Christians (James 5:1-6). In recent decades, liberal religious groups have abandoned the Bible for a social gospel, or social activism; while over the same period many conservative people have defended the Bible and neglected the poor, oppressed, and the helpless. Abortion should not be abandoned to the Catholic Church as its social issue. The plight of the elderly must not be left to federal agencies for solution. Family disintegration is a concern for every Christian.

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH EPHRAIM?

What Is Wrong With The Church?

Hosea 1:1 - 14:9

In about 933 BC the kingdom of Israel was divided into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom was usually called Israel but often it was designated by "Ephraim" bit most influential tribe.

In about 760 BC God sent His word by Hosea. Very vividly the prophet describes God's people. The picture is not beautiful; it looks too much like the church today for us to find enjoyment in looking at it!

I. *Three Figures Describing Ephraim*

1. A silly dove -- without understanding (7:11)
 - a. They had forgotten the law of the Lord.
 - b. They could not remember their own history.
2. A cake not turned -- (7:8)
 - a. Tragedy strikes when no one is watching.
3. A taught heifer that loved to tread out the corn (10:11)

II. *Three Things These Conditions Had Done To Them*

1. It made their love like a morning mist (6:4).
 - a. Not lasting, easily burned away.
2. It caused them to hire lovers (8:9).
 - a. They courted the favor of their enemies.
3. It put them beyond help (4:17)
 - a. Ephraim is joined to idols, wedded to them.
 - b. Would not give them up.

III. *The Causes Which Brought About and Kept Alive These Conditions with Ephraim*

1. Ephraim feedeth on the winds (12:1)
 - a. Speaking of their spiritual weakness.
2. Ephraim followeth the east wind.
 - a. Their goals and aims were useless.
3. Bound up his iniquity and his sin (13:12).
 - a. Tried to conceal it from self and God.
 - b. Repentance and prayer called for.

Conclusion:

Let us read the last verse of the book of Hosea, "Who is wise, that he may understand these thoughts? prudent, that he may know them? for the ways of the LORD are right and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein."