

PREACHING THROUGH JOEL, AMOS OBADIAH, JONAH, MICAH, NAHUM

JOEL (three chapters)

From evidence in the book itself it appears that Joel was one of the earliest of the prophets, writing about 800 B.C. The occasion of his message was a terrible plague of locusts, which he said came as God's judgment upon His sinful people. He also prophesied the coming of another Great Day of the Lord, when judgment would be pronounced. That was fulfilled in the Great Day of Pentecost, seven weeks after Christ's resurrection (See Acts 2:16-21).

AMOS (nine chapters)

Amos, a shepherd living not far from Jerusalem about 750 B.C., visited the center of idol worship at Bethel in Israel, and there proclaimed God's wrath upon the people for their moral and social corruption.

Chapters 1-2 He pronounces God's judgment on the nations, including Israel.

3-5 He describes Israel's sins of intemperance, injustice, and pride.

6-8 He gives a series of figurative predictions of destruction.

9 He tells of future glories to come through a faithful remnant.

OBADIAH (one chapter)

Writing soon after the destruction of Jerusalem, 586 B.C., Obadiah tells of the coming complete downfall of Edom. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, and had been persistent and cruel enemies of the descendants of Jacob.

JONAH (four chapters)

After an unsuccessful attempt to avoid the task, Jonah visited Nineveh, capital of the mighty Assyrian empire, sometime between 800 and 750 B.C., and brought the message of God's judgment. Modern archaeologists, led to a place called the "Munas (Jonah) Mound," discovered near the buried ruins of the ancient

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city of Nineveh. Jesus referred to the incident of Jonah and the great fish as the “sign” of His own burial and resurrection (Matt. 12:39-41).

MICAH (seven chapters)

Brief records of prophetic messages delivered over a course of years, about **740** to **700 B.C.**, appear in this powerful little book, Micah preached in Jerusalem during the later days of Isaiah, found and condemned the same sins, and gave, especially in chapters 4 and 5, prophecies of the same Messiah.

NAHUM (three chapters)

Speaking in Palestine not long before the Chaldeans conquered and destroyed Nineveh, **607 B.C.**, Nahum prophesied that event in its completeness and finality. The repentance which had followed Jonah’s preaching in Nineveh 150 years before had saved the city for some time, but cruel wickedness had returned so that judgment, complete and terrible, was the only answer.

Sermon Outlines Provided:

- “The Day of the Lord” (Joel **2:27-32**)
- “Hunger for the Word” (Amos **8:11-14**)
- “God’s Reluctant Messenger” (Jonah **3:1-4:3**)
- “From Bethlehem and Jerusalem” (Micah 5:2-5; **4:1-5**)

Other Suggested Sermon Topics:

- “Judgment Coming Near” (Amos **2**)
- “He That Reproveth” (Amos 5:10-15)
- “God Like Mother” (Micah **7:18-20**)
- “The Great Stronghold” (Nahum **1:1-8**)

QUESTIONS OVER JOEL THROUGH NAHUM

1. What will be poured out on all mankind? (Joel **2:28**)
2. What did Israel not know how to do? (Amos **3:10**)
3. What draws near on all nations? (Obadiah 15)
4. Where was Jonah to go? (Jonah 1:2)
5. What does the Lord require of man? (Micah **6:8**)
6. What will people say about Nineveh? (Nahum **3:7**)

PREACHING THROUGH JOEL
THE DAY OF THE LORD
(Joel 2:27-32)

INTRODUCTION –

The Day of the Lord is theme of Joel's three chapters.

- A. Joel speaks with mixed emotions: "The Day of the Lord is great and terrible; and who can abide it?" (2: 11).
- B. It is great with mercy to the penitent; it is terrible with judgment to the rebels against God.

I. JOEL'S MESSAGE COMBINES FIVE ASPECTS OF "THE DAY OF THE LORD"

– The time of realizing God's presence with His people.

- A. It is the day when God pronounces judgment.
 - 1. He sits in judgment at "the Valley of Jehoshaphat" (the word means "Jehovah judges") where are gathered the nations of oppressors (3:2, 12).
 - 2. This is also called "the valley of decision" or "valley of determination" where the Divine Judge determines sentence on the sinners (3:14).
 - 3. Later tradition identified this valley with the Kidron Valley, or Hinnom.
 - 4. It is a terrible day for the sinner: "Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come" (1:15).
- B. It is a day when God brings punishment.
 - 1. Chap. 1 describes a terrible plague of locusts which came as chastening for the sins of the nation.
 - 2. NASB speaks of "gnawing locust," "swarming locust," "creeping locust," "stripping locust" (1:4) and Chap. 2 speaks vividly of them as invading army,
 - 3. Joel 2:1, 2 speaks of a superlatively dark day.
 - 4. The beasts and the land suffer with the sinful people.
- C. It is a day for repentance and turning to God (2: 12-17).
 - 1. Nation's leaders are to declare fasting, mourning, praying, and changing of ways.
 - 2. "Turn ye even to me with all your heart."

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- D. It becomes a day of God's relenting and bringing deliverance (2:18-27).
 - 1. Mercy, rather than destruction, accords with God's nature (v. 13).
 - 2. Deliverance and restoration may be promised confidently to the penitent.
 - 3. The beasts and the land shall share in prosperity.
- E. It is a day when God's presence becomes evident in manifold wonders (2:28-31).
 - 1. God's Spirit made available to mankind.
 - 2. Visions and dreams, the means of divine revelation, experienced by young and old.
 - 3. Servants as well as masters will receive the divine presence.
 - 4. There is yet a final day of judgment, to be preceded by cataclysm.

II. THE GREAT DAY OF PENTECOST (ACTS 2) FULFILLS THE PROPHECY IN A SPECIAL WAY.

- A. God's judgment was spoken in convicting the hearers of murdering His Son (22-36).
- B. God's punishment had been borne by Christ, so "save yourselves from this . . ." (2:40).
- C. God's offer of repentance became a focal point (2:37-39).
- D. God's offer of salvation was confidently made and gladly received (2:38-41).
- E. God's presence (visible in tongues of fire and audible in tongues of speech, for that occasion) was promised in less spectacular indwelling for all obedient believers.

CONCLUSION —

What does the Day of the Lord mean to you?

- A. A generation tries to ignore God and shudders at the thought of His presence.
- B. A people and a nation totter on the brink of destruction.
- C. For repentance "Today is the day of salvation!"
- D. Then the Day of the Lord is a time of supreme joy—"Even so come, Lord Jesus!"

PREACHING THROUGH AMOS
HUNGER FOR THE WORD

(Amos 8:11-14)

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INTRODUCTION —

Amos speaks of famine — it is a term not well known in America. It is not lack of television, autos, drinks. It is not *shortage* of the essentials — it is total lack of food.

Famine of the bread of life — see the story of Amos. (Man shall not live by bread alone.)

Israel had set up her calves to worship in Dan and Bethel. She had neglected the moral law of God, guilty of sins of luxury and oppression. Amaziah had said of Amos, "The land is not able to bear all his words" (7:10). Amos says the unappreciated blessings shall be removed — famine. The people shall seek that which they have rejected, but not find it.

I. AMAZIAH COMPLAINS THAT THERE IS TOO MUCH OF GOD'S WORD IN ISRAEL.

Contrast: The word of Jehovah was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision (I Sam. 3:1).

A. Many things are little valued because they are with us all the time.

Air — how the trapped miners prayed for a breath!
Water — dust bowl picture shows a cow licking spigot of a dry pump.

Bread — Hungry men made soup of a mouldy loaf.

Home — last week a boy ran away for two days.

God and His Word — The godless lawyer seeks a place without a church; later sends back plea to preacher classmate to come and start one.

II. THE DESPISED BLESSING IS REMOVED — The time comes when the world is no longer heard.

A. Sometimes the action is deliberate — as a lawyer, or the one who "had too much church when he was a boy."

B. Sometimes it is hasty and rash, as one who breaks up a home in an angry quarrel.

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C. More often it comes by long neglect.

Church—Ask your friends if they really want the doors closed.

Bible—How long would it take you to discover if someone substituted blank pages for the Word?

Prayer—How long since you availed yourself of the privilege?

Suppose that the things about which we complain were removed, one by one. . . .

III. THE LOSS IS FELT MOST KEENLY—a genuine famine.

A. A woman complains she can't pray—the minister forbids prayer—she comes back pleading to be released from the restriction.

B. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God;
When shall I come and appear before God?"

(Psalm 42:1, 2).

IV. THERE IS SEEKING, BUT NOT FINDING, AND SUBSTITUTES WON'T SATISFY.

—One says after hearing a humanist sermon,

"They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

Carried to its limit, the picture of hell. The word is gone; God is gone; Christian friendship gone, beyond hope.

CONCLUSION —

At least twice God saw famine, and sent bread.

A. Manna in the wilderness.

B. "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven; if any man eat this bread, he shall live forever; yea, and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

What if the Christian gospel and the invitation were removed? They may be!

PREACHING THROUGH JONAH
GOD'S RELUCTANT MESSENGER
(Jonah 3:1 – 4:3)

INTRODUCTION –

- A. Whose preaching brought salvation?
A popular professor made sport of Jonah as a “minus prophet,” wholly wrong in his attitude and approach. But whose preaching brought salvation to Nineveh?
- B. Jonah's reluctance understandable.
 - 1. What other prophet went to a foreign enemy capital, or vastly differing language, culture, and religion?
 - 2. Jonah was of Gath Hopher, north of Nazareth; hence acquainted with cruel raids of the Assyrians from the north.
 - 3. Nineveh described in Nahum 3:1: “Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery.”
 - 4. Nineveh prepared? “Just before Jonah's time Assyria was torn by internal strife, weakened by revolt, and suffering from plague and famine.” So God sent Jonah. . . .

I. JONAH RELUCTANT TO GO; BUT HE WENT (v. 1).

- A. Difficulty evident in cultural differences.
- B. Danger seen in announcing judgment on streets of the cruel enemy's capital city.
- C. Distaste evident in Jonah's attitude (chap. 4).
- D. Consider our own reluctance to “go where You want me to go.”
 - 1. What is it that you don't want to do, so put off to another time?
 - 2. Do you say, or feel, with Jonah, “I'd rather die”(4:3)?
 - 3. Do you find some “necessary” other work to occupy your time and save conscience?
 - 4. Do you say, “I have some things I need to straighten out first”?— Then find sympathy for, and instruction from, Jonah.

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II. JONAH RELUCTANT TO PREACH GOD'S MESSAGE, BUT HE PREACHED IT (1:2; 3:2).

A. God's prescribed message.

1. Judgment: "Cry against it, for their wickedness is come up before me" (1:2).
Nineveh shall be overthrown" (3:4).
2. More? "Proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you" (3:2, NASB).
 - a. The Ninevites learned somewhere that if they would repent, God might relent!
 - b. Where did they learn about repentance and forgiveness? From Jonah?

B. Ninevites' response indicates something of the message.

1. They believed God ("Believed in God" — 3:5, NASB).
2. They fasted and wore sackcloth, expressing remorse.
3. They heeded their king's proclamation "Let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way" (3:8, NASB). "God saw their works" (v. 10).
The message brought works of faith.

III. JONAH RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT GOD'S GENEROSITY (3:10; 4:1-3).

A. Of what was Jonah afraid?

1. Of failure, such as indicated in Isaiah 6:9-12?
2. Or of success? That "those people" may become God's people and take over our church.

B. Jonah's spirit still in rebellion.

1. From the first he had known, and disagreed with God's grace, mercy, kindness.
2. More concerned with pride than with salvation.

C. Jonah faced the challenge of God's question.

1. "Art thou greatly angry?" (4:4, 9, marginal reading).
2. The Ninevites had only enjoyed the same divine grace that Jonah had known in rescue from the great fish: "Salvation is of the Lord" (2:7, 9).

D. Did Jonah come to share God's care for people?

CONCLUSION —

God's obedient curmudgeon achieved divine purposes despite his reluctance. We, too.

PREACHING THROUGH MICAH
FROM BETHLEHEM AND JERUSALEM
(Micah 5:2-5; 4:1-5)

INTRODUCTION —

- A. As Jonah was God's reluctant messenger, so was Israel.
- B. Micah chides them for their failure to make God known to the world. Predicts the punishment that follows their failure.
- C. There shall be the remnant and Messiah's kingdom, through whom God will accomplish His purpose.

I. BETHLEHEM, THE HOME OF THE SHEPHERD KING.

- A. Historically, Saul the first king had been a failure through disobedience, —David, the shepherd of Bethlehem, was chosen to lead in God's power. (One who would feed the flock rather than fleece it.)
- B. Prophetically, the kings have failed, since they depend on might, not on God. — The Great Shepherd shall be raised up, from Bethlehem.
 - 1. His goings forth are from of old,
“In the beginning was the word” (John 1:1).
“Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).
 - 2. (God) will give them up, until the great birth— 400 silent years.
 - 3. He shall feed His flock.
“I am the Good Shepherd” (John 10:14).
 - 4. He shall be great unto the ends of the earth—
“Go into all the world” (Mark 16:15).
 - 5. This man shall be our peace—“Prince of peace.”
(See Eph. 2:14-18.)

II. JERUSALEM, THE PLACE OF THE GOING FORTH OF THE GOSPEL.

- A. Following Messiah, the word shall go forth to all the world.
“Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again

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from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:45-47).

Compare events of the Day of Pentecost.

- B. “They therefore that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).
- C. Thus, the “old Jerusalem Gospel”—That which went forth from Jerusalem. It is in this Gospel, and this alone, that God’s plan lies. — The nations shall go to it for instruction. — Thus they come to the Bible as God’s Word.

III. THE PROPHECY OF PEACE.

- A. God is the judge—let men put aside vengeance. (See Rom. 12:17-21.)
- B. The present situation causes many to be cynical.
 - the proof lies in the accomplishment.
 - 1. He has made peace between Jew and Gentile *in Him*.
 - 2. He has made peace between nations. — Witness 3000 miles unarmed border Canada—U.S.
 - “Christ in the Andes.”
 - 3. He has made peace and brought salvation to each individual who would receive.

CONCLUSION —

The gift is available; some have received it. It is not forced upon any; multitudes reject. What about you?