

Kings and Prophets 17-08-03

This is August the 3rd, 2017. We continue our study of kings and prophets tonight. We concluded the book of Daniel last time, who is an exilic prophet along with Ezekiel.

We have previously seen Hosea, Joel, and Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, who were prophets that gave warnings to Israel and to Judah, particularly Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Hosea and Amos, anticipating God's judgment on the northern kingdom for Hosea and Amos, Joel and Isaiah and Jeremiah warning the nation of Judah primarily. As we step back and look at these as a thematic collection, there are 12 of the minor prophets. We began looking at those last time.

We're going to continue that look tonight and prepare ourselves for looking at the post-exilic history of the Judah folks as they return. But this is a good opportunity for us to ensure that our long study of the narrative of the kings and that as context for the prophets has stuck in our minds. It would be sad to have gone through it for these last five years and not really be able to have anything at our mental fingertips, so we're summarizing and organizing what we have learned up to this point so that we can finish with a sprint and move into our next study.

So we're nearing the end of kings and prophets, and we will try to provide some helpful hooks on which to hang a lot of the information that we've accumulated over the course of these many months. But let's begin our study tonight in a word of prayer, and then we'll get started. Father, it is always such a privilege to find ourselves in the company of believers who love you and love to study your word and learn more about the Lord Jesus Christ and our place in Him.

As it is anticipated and reflected in your dealings with your people Israel in the Old Testament, we find so often that the principles and the examples that are given to us through the nation find an outworking in our personal lives. And we pray that tonight as we pick up that study and continue it together, that your Holy Spirit will be our teacher, that each one will find the truth of your word that we see tonight meaningful and helpful, pertinent to our immediate situation, helpful to our motivation, encouraging and guiding as we think our thoughts and make our decisions. We pray that in all things our lives, both individually and collectively, will be pleasing in your sight and glorifying to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray these things in His name, amen. Well, so, this is going to be something of a pop quiz. Gave you some of my suggested mnemonic aids or helpful clues for remembering the minor prophets.

I see looks of consternation already, but fear not. I have the advantage of having them all written down, so even though I think they're stuck in my mind, if I get stuck, I have a reference. But you remember that kind of to put them in a... And let me just back up and say this.

The minor prophets are a substantial portion of the Word of God, right? If you look at your Bible, you've got these 12 books. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. You just... I'm from the old school.

We learned these by rote, and it's very helpful. I would say, if you don't have those in your mind, just use whatever method you want to get them in there. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah.

Those are the first six. And so, we listed those last time because chronologically speaking, generally, there's a little bit of opinion on exactly where they fit, but those are generally either on the cusp of the captivity or before it. Your two writing prophets to Israel especially, Hosea and Amos, are very much before the Assyrian crisis, the Assyrian conquest, and the disposition and dissemination of the Northern Kingdom out of existence, right? So if you say we've got a writing prophet to Israel, you can be pretty sure they're going to be before the year that the Northern Kingdom goes out, which is 721.

You just have to stick it in your mind, 721. So Hosea, skip Joel and Amos, you've got Israel, Judah, Israel. Those are your first three.

Hosea, Joel, Amos is Israel, Judah, Israel. So Hosea and Amos, that's where we start. So you've got Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah.

That's what we're going to start with again tonight. Now, remember those first ones, we used the last letter of the name to kind of help us remember what it's about. So out of the blue, shot in the dark, somebody says, well you know, I hear in your Bible there's a book called Hosea.

What's that about? What would you say? Adultery. Adultery. Very good.

There's an A at the end, Hosea. It's adultery. Remember the, yes, there's always got to be a teacher's pet and she's mine.

But it's helpful to remember, Hosea is the one with Gomer. What a name for a wife, Gomer. But the unfaithfulness is at the heart of that.

It's one of the primary examples in the book. And that helps us remember what the rest of the book is about. Now what we want to do tonight is, I gave us some little memory aids to try to remember the gist of each book.

But tonight, I just tell you now, what we want to do is not only remember them, but say, so what? That's great if it's an Old Testament minor prophet to Israel, but why do I need to know what's in there? What good is it to me? What is God telling me in this book? So as we review these, be watching for that, because I'm going to suggest to you not only that Hosea has, as a part of its opening theme, this idea of adultery, which of course is unfaithfulness to a covenant, right? Marriage is a covenant, Israel, remember Israel, Hosea is a prophet to Israel, was unfaithful to that covenant. So what is God going to say about that? And if I don't feel like I'm being particularly unfaithful to my covenant, then why should I care about this book? Can't I just skip it and go to the Psalms and the still waters and the green pastures and my soul being restored and the table of bounty and all the rest of it? Why would I want to pay attention to Hosea? So as we come to each of these, let's watch for that in addition to just remembering

what it is. So again, Hosea, adultery, unfaithfulness to the covenant.

The theme of this book, I would suggest to you, and by the way, all of these prophets, you notice how we didn't have writing prophets in the days of following Moses and Joshua. Once the land is settled, you've got this big long period. We've got some history in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, but you don't have any writing prophets.

When do the prophets start appearing and delivering messages that are of such importance that God says, put them down in writing and preserve them because these are going to benefit all of God's people from now on? When does that start happening? It starts happening in the days, even in the Northern Kingdom, after Elijah and Elisha. Do we have a book of Elijah? No, we don't. Do we have a book of Elisha? No, we don't.

When do we start getting these? It is when God's people in the nations of Israel and Judah begin to get lined up for judgment. The overarching theme of all of your 12 minor prophets, I'm not saying anything pro or con about the major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah with Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel, those are very big and complex books, that's why they're major. So not saying they don't address judgment, there's plenty of it.

You may remember, some of you, Isaiah 1-39, we went verse by verse through 39 chapters of God's judgment, turning it in the light, every different facet of it, why he was doing it, the details of what brought it on, and so on. But we're talking about the minor prophets, these 12 books. The overarching theme, the thread that runs through them all, every single one of them is judgment.

So if somebody picks any one of these 12 minor prophets out of the air, or if you suddenly have one come to your consciousness, you wake up in the middle of the night and you say, Habakkuk, Habakkuk, what is going on in Habakkuk? You can start with, well he's a minor prophet and there's something about judgment in there, and then reach back for your memory aid, your mnemonic or your acronym or whatever. So Hosea, adultery, it's going to be something about judgment. We've got unfaithfulness to a covenant involved here, so I would guess that this is something about judgment for that covenant unfaithfulness, right? And that's what the book is about.

It is the judgment of God for failure to heed the covenant, covenant responsibilities, and they have had centuries. They have had Elijah and Elisha come and rebuke their kings and condemn their worship in Dan and the golden calves and Jeroboam and all the rest of it, Ahab has been up there, Jezebel has come in bringing idolatry, and Hosea says judgment is coming. But there is a complementary theme.

What's the name of the book? Hosea, what is this a variation on? What name is it a variation on? Yeshua, Yashav, Yoshea, this is the Lord saves. The complementary theme in Hosea is yes, there is judgment coming for covenant unfaithfulness, but there is love in judgment. Even as God judges His people, He isn't doing it solely in anger.

He's not a vindictive, implacable, unapproachable God. He loves His people and this judgment is necessary. It is so often lost, I think, in our analysis of consequences, that many times consequences come because it is an unfortunate necessity and we inflict consequences on our children for disobedience, for indifference, for laziness, or a whole host of things that we try to train out of ourselves and our children.

So in Hosea, you start with adultery, covenant unfaithfulness, that's the occasion for judgment, but a parallel theme and a complementary theme is God's love in judgment. So if you look at Hosea, there is a sort of a theme verse in Hosea 11, verse 8. Hosea 11, verse 8. How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Adma? How can I set you like Zeboim? My heart churns within me. My sympathy is stirred.

I will not execute the fierceness of my anger. I will not again destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst. And I will not come with terror alone.

Love even in the midst of this judgment. Make sense? Hosea, it's an anticipation of Yeshua, of the Lord Jesus Himself. He is going to be judged.

He is going to bear the fierceness of God's wrath on sin. But do you think God ever stopped loving the Lord Jesus? Do you think He ever stopped loving the world for whom He sent the Lord Jesus? What's the most famous verse in the Bible? For God so loved the world that He executed this fierce judgment on sin, so that there could be redemption and forgiveness and salvation to those who will respond. Right? That's John 3.16. That's the message of Hosea.

Wonderful book. And it is the opener for this collection of 12 minor prophets. Okay, Hosea, adultery, covenant unfaithfulness, judgment on that, but there is love even in the judgment.

That brings us to Joel. Remember I told you that's Elijah backwards? Eli-Yah? This is Yoel. Yah-el.

Eli, my God is the Lord. My God is Yahweh. Here is Yoel.

Yah-el. And what's our memory aid? Remember we're using the last letters here. Joel, locusts.

There's locusts in here. There's also locusts later on, but I don't want to get confused by mentioning the other books that contain them. So, Joel, locusts.

And this is a book about the day of the Lord. And it's kind of easy to remember because in Acts, on the day of Pentecost, remember Peter speaks up and he says, this is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel, that in the day of the Lord your old men will see visions and your young men will dream dreams. I will pour out my spirit.

And so, locusts are a judgment, right? We've got that thread of judgment running through. Joel is a prophet to Judah. And he is one of the early warning signs to the nation of Judah that they need to mend their ways, look to the north, don't be like your sister up there.

The judgment of God will come and locusts are a very complete and devastating bad day for

agriculture, right? But if you look at Joel 2.14, this is one of the theme verses. Joel 2.14. Now therefore says the Lord, Turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments.

Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and he relents from doing harm. So here we have, remember in Hosea it was love in the midst of judgment. Here we have repentance, making the expression of that love possible.

Turn, change your ways. So there's a point to these prophets beyond just proclaiming and warning about God's judgment. There are aspects of that judgment.

There is an appeal made to the hearts of God's people. Turn ye at my reproof is the idea here. So you have that in 2.14. Turn the page to Joel 3.18. Actually in my Bible it's two pages.

It will come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drip with new wine, the hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water. A fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord, and water in the valley of Acacias. Now we're talking about locusts, the horrific agricultural judgment, this very devastating judgment of God, and yet there is promise.

And in each of these books, every single one of the minor prophets, there is a note of hope. There is a promise of restoration in every single one. Typically toward the end, God gets his message across.

But for those who have said, well, you know, but I am that remnant. I am one of those that have not bowed the knee to Baal. I'm one of those who I understand and I agree.

I think our country is ripe for judgment. But I love the Lord. I am persevering and striving in my small corner to shine as a light and to be faithful and to be obedient.

And is there any hope for me? Is the righteous going to be swept away with the wicked? In every single one of these books, without exception, there is a note of hope and a promise of restoration. God will not always be angry. The judgment is not final.

Even in the Northern Kingdom, you say, well, they never did come back from the Assyrian captivity. They disappeared. Look at the book of Revelation.

Where do your 144,000 servants of God come from? You've got those tribes. All of the tribes listed except Dan. It's kind of like all of the apostles are coming back and having a gate name for them except Judas.

You can be so bad that you truly are written completely out of the plan. But we are convinced of better things of you, brethren, things that accompany salvation. Remember that quote.

For example, in Hosea, chapter 14, verses 1 through 8, there's a strong note of restoration. Hosea 14, pretty much the whole chapter. Israel, return to the Lord your God.

You have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to Him, take away our iniquity.

Receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifice of our lips. Assyria will not save us. We will not ride horses, nor shall we say any more to the work of our hands, because you are our gods.

For in you the fatherless find mercy. I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely, for my anger has turned away from Him.

The whole last chapter of Hosea sounds that note. Restoration, love, even as judgment is in progress and on the way. Same thing in Joel.

Turn to the end of Joel, chapter 3, verses 16 through 21. So Hosea was love in judgment. This is repentance in judgment, which makes the expression of that love possible.

God never stops loving us, but He can't always express it. He can't express it unless we change our minds. But in 3, 16 through 21, the Lord also will roar from Zion and utter His voice from Jerusalem.

The heavens and earth will shake. The Lord will be a shelter for His people and the strength of the children of Israel. Yes, the locusts are coming and there's going to be devastation, but for God's people, for those who are faithful and endure to the end, there is the ultimate vindication, the ultimate justification, the ultimate blessing and reward.

So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain. Jerusalem shall be holy. No alien shall ever pass through her again.

Remember, the locusts are actually invading armies coming through Judah. It will be in that day the mountains shall drip with new wine, the hills will flow with milk, the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water, a fountain will flow from the house of the Lord. Verse 20, Judah will abide forever, Jerusalem from generation to generation.

I will acquit them of the guilt of bloodshed, whom I had not acquitted, for the Lord dwells in Zion. So, judgment. Should we just be afraid of judgment, or should we examine it and figure out its causes, what our role is in enduring it, are we worthy of it, are we not? And if we're worthy of it, what can we do? We can change our minds, so that the love of God can be expressed and these promises of restoration can take place.

These two, I'm elaborating a little bit, because this is the pattern you're going to see in every single one of the Minor Prophets. There is an aspect of judgment, there is that thread of judgment running through, but it is informative, it is helpful to us. God's love never ceases for His people, even in the midst of judgment.

Okay, let's see if we can find that in the next one. Hosea, Joel, Amos. What's our memory aid for Amos? To get into the content.

It ends in an S. Amos was what kind of a guy? He was a fig picker and a shepherd. I always think of the tower area, south of Jerusalem, where the sacrificial sheep were raised. We had a wonderful Christmas special looking at that whole concept.

The Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world harks back to that. So Amos, shepherd. And if you look at the theme of Amos, in essence, it is God loves even in judgment.

We have the opportunity to change our minds even in judgment, but we have to recognize that God is just. He is right in judging. When He wiped out all of those people with the flood, this is one of the first things atheists will bring up to you.

You've got a heinous, vindictive, murdering God. He's genocidal, Dawkins likes to say. He wipes out hundreds of thousands of people in purges like the flood.

We have to have confidence that when God executes judgment, He is just. He is right. And even as God loves the world, He is still going to judge the world.

It is necessary for the preservation and the future of the world that it be judged. He can't not. I think about our encounters with various kinds of cancer.

I think our beloved dog has got cancer. And I would love to be able to go in and just remove it all to preserve him, make him last longer. It's not possible for several reasons.

And so it's eventually going to get him. He's got a lump on his leg that gets bigger by the week. And it's sort of heart-rending to watch even a pet, much less a human being, a family member, endure the ravages that come to us because of the fallen nature of creation.

It's the perfect plan, the perfect provision, the perfect genetic codes that were engineered at the beginning have been corrupted. And the body turns on itself and reproduction goes amok. And it's a hard thing.

If I were God and I could perfectly and justly judge the cancer out of my dog and then judge any organ failure out of him, if I could judge disintegration and decrepitude out of him, he would live forever. How much more each other? If we could find and fix, as science has ambitions of doing, everything that goes wrong. Well, your telomeres are getting shorter every time your cells divide.

We can fix that. Well, your immune system has gone amok. We're going to fix that.

We're going to fix this and we're going to fix that. We'll never be able to fix it because we are not the perfect judge that God is. Hosea, Joel, Amos, the shepherd.

The shepherd gives his life for the sheep. The shepherd knows his sheep. He knows them.

They know his voice. There is a relationship there. And God is just.

If he has to execute judgment, if he has to prune, if he has to purge, if he has to winnow, even if we don't understand it, we trust that God is just. That is the message. That is the theme of the book of Amos.

The shepherd loves the sheep, but the shepherd is going to use the hook and the staff. The shepherd may have to judge outside things that are coming in, threatening the lion and the bear that David encountered. He is just.

There is justice in judgment. Look at Amos 2, verses 6-16. 6-16.

Let me back up to 6. For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not turn away its punishment because they sell the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals. They pant after the dust of the earth which is as the head of the poor and pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go into the same girl to defile my holy name.

They lie down at every altar in clothes taken in pledge. They drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their God. And so on.

There are legitimate covenant-breaking sinful, evil practices that God must judge. If His people are going to be preserved, if the remnant are going to be brought forth and sanctified, this stuff has to go. And most people would agree that enslaving others, perverting others, leading others into stumbling, which is listed later on in here, is a part of that.

So it is just, it is right, for God to execute judgment. You cannot find a judgment in the Bible for which the Bible does not indicate the reasons. And they are just and they are right reasons.

But at the same time, there is a promise of restoration. Flip a few pages over in Amos to chapter 9, verses 11 through 15. Again, the last chapter, where you would expect to find it.

On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down. I will repair the damages. I will raise up the ruins and rebuild it as in days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom.

And we've done some study on this in the past. That's actually the remnant of man. And all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who does this thing.

The days are coming, says the Lord, when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes, him who sows seed. The mountains will drip with sweet wine and the hills shall flow with it. I will bring back the captives of my people, Israel.

They shall build the waste places and inhabit them. They shall plant vineyards, drink wine from them, and so on. The promise of restoration is always there.

And this is assurance. It is comfort. It is motivation.

That while we may be in a group that endures judgment, God knows us. He knows us by name.

He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.

Those who respond, those who repent, those who change their mind, God will honor with blessing and reward. You will notice also that you can broadly categorize the condemnations here under two headings. When you go back to our first prophet, Hosea, and adultery and the breaking of the covenant, Jesus summed up the whole law and the prophets in two statements.

Do you remember what they were? The first and greatest commandment, somebody was trying to trap him, and they said, What's the first and greatest commandment? Because if he prioritized one over another, they would say, Well, what about these others? And so he summarized it all, and he said, The first and greatest is, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength. And later on, somebody who probably had heard that came back and Jesus asked him, Well, what do you think the greatest commandment is? And he said, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength. And he added, And all your mind.

Remember that? But it's in the New Testament twice. So it's a valid summary. Well, what's the problem that Hosea addresses? That first and great commandment has been violated.

Breaking the covenant. It's adultery. It's unfaithfulness.

It is a breach of that love. Joel says, You need to repent. You need to change your mind so that the Spirit of the Lord can be poured out on those who allow themselves to receive God's grace and be cleansed and be those who receive those blessings.

Amos, once again, it's the second commandment that is violated. Look at these condemnations in verse 6-16 of chapter 2. These are breaches against their fellow Israelites. You're taking advantage of them.

You're gratifying yourself and pleasing yourself at the expense of others. It violates the second commandment. So Hosea, Joel, and Amos.

You've got adultery, locusts, and the shepherd. You've got love in judgment, repentance in judgment, and justice in judgment. And that alone, even if we just thought about those three prophets, that would be grist for weeks to come.

Looking at our own lives, looking at the prospect of judgment on this nation because of the vileness of where the culture has gone. And yet, we have a message of hope when we talk to those who express an interest, who want something beyond the immediacy of this life. What can we tell them? Yes, the righteous God is going to judge these evils, but God still loves, and God has made a way for those who will repent.

God's judgment is just, but there is still grace available. Now, what does James 4.6 tell us? What do you remember? Who does God resist? God resists the proud, but He gives grace to who? The humble. So if you recognize that there is a loving God, but He is also just and He is judging, and

the issue is change of mind, we're going to have one of two minds, right? We're either going to be proud or we're going to be humble.

And that's the message of Obadiah. Obadiah. What was our memory aid for Obadiah? Obed-Edom.

And the easy way to remember that is, Ebed, in Hebrew, Ebed is the word for servant. So who do you think Obadiah is? He is the servant of who? Obadiah. He is the servant of the Lord.

Who was Obed-Edom? He was a servant of Edom. That's not good. Edom is going to be judged.

And that's the message of Obadiah. And why does Edom get judged? Edom is descended from Esau. Esau is Jacob's brother.

He got cheated out of his blessing and so on. What's the problem in Edom that God is presenting to His people, Judah, through Obadiah? He's not really ultimately talking to Edom or Obadiah would have been sent to Edom and Edom would have their own little Bible over there. Who got the book of Obadiah? Judah did.

The people of God got it. The Edomites don't have a tradition of, well, here's this book that God gave us. God is talking to Edom, but it's sort of like overhearing someone getting a real chewing out and you are instructed and you learn thereby and you say, wow, I don't want to make that mistake.

This guy's really getting chewed out. And so as God chews on Edom in the book of Obadiah, He's doing it to be overheard. The book is given to God's people.

We have no record that anybody from Judah ever went over to Edom and delivered this message, which is kind of a shame. I wonder if maybe some of them would have repented. I don't know.

But it's really a sideways communication to God's people. And what is the problem in Edom? Take a look at, it's really a short book. It's just got the one chapter.

So look at verses 3 and 4. The pride of your heart has deceived you. There you go. It is pride.

The pride of your heart has deceived you. God judges pride. What was James 4, 6 again? God resisteth the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Every single one of these minor prophets, you can sort of distill the message into that. God's judgment is just, it's coming, but there's still a loving God behind it. And if you're humble, if you turn, you can line yourself up for God's love and God's preservation and God's ultimate salvation, vindication, glorification.

It's really James. He's kind of an Old Testament guy anyway. He got in trouble for tripping Peter and trying to trip Paul, and Paul rebuked him because men from James caused a lot of

problems in the New Testament.

What was James' trouble? He was still too Jewish. He was too much of a law guy. Well, I know there's faith, but there's works too.

Don't forget the works. Of course, he's right in saying that, but he's an Old Testament guy. And he's got it right in 4, 6. God will resist the proud, but he'll give grace to the humble.

And that's really summed up in this book of Obadiah. It is a judgment on pride. Edom's sin is pride.

And that pride leads them to insensitivity, leads them to take advantage of their brother Jacob. When Jacob is down, Esau's over there kicking him. And God says, I'm going to judge you for that.

And once again, second greatest commandment. Love your neighbor as yourself. Love your brother.

And Edom is guilty in this prophetic picture of taking advantage instead of being humble and loving and saying, there but the grace of God go I. Right? So there is also, even here, the promise of restoration. Look at the last three verses, 17 through 20. I guess that would be four verses.

Unto Mount Zion there shall be deliverance. There shall be holiness. The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph aflame. The house of Esau shall be stubble. They shall kindle them and devour them.

No survival shall remain of the house of Esau, for the Lord has spoken. No survivor. So you see the contrast there.

Esau pride, God resists. They're stubble in the fire. Jacob, humble, going to be preserved, going to be restored.

That's the vestige of Obadiah in a nutshell. Obed, Edom. Edom represents the proud.

Restoration, judgment on pride. So what do we learn from that? Examine ourselves and see if we're in the faith. Purge me with hyssop, so that I can be clean.

Wash me, make me white as snow. Examine me, see if there be any wicked way in me. Show me where my pride has blinded me.

These are prayers we can pray. I don't want to be on the judgment end of that stick. You know, God's got the rod of judgment in His hand.

And when the rod falls, nations are shattered like potter's vessels. I want to be, what's on the

other end of that rod? God's hand. I want to be in God's hand.

I don't want to be down at the end of that rod. Whom the Lord loves, He chastens. And He scourges the sons whom He receives.

Which sons is He going to receive? The ones who learn from the rebuke? Or the ones who are incorrigible and insensate? Who scar over? Who have that sclerosis of the soul? We want to move toward God, if and when the rod swings, and be in His hands. Obadiah. Then Jonah.

Jonah's easy. What's the memory aid for Jonah? Where does he go? Nineveh. Nineveh represents the Gentiles.

They're the capital of the Assyrian Empire. Oh my goodness, these are the ones that are used as the rod and staff of God's anger and indignation. Remember, Assyria is the rod of mine anger and the staff of mine indignation.

Well, Nineveh, that's the capital. That's the Washington D.C. of Assyria. And yet, God sends Jonah with a message to them.

It couldn't be more offensive to Jonah's sensibilities than to be sent to the land of the Gentiles, who are going to be God's scourge. By the way, what is going to happen to the nation of Israel ultimately? Where are they going to go when God takes their land away for disobedience? Where do they go? I will scatter you among the nations. It's a preview.

So, when Jonah begrudgingly goes and says, well, here's the Old Testament that we've preserved, and here's the New Testament that the first generation of Christians who are all Jewish have written down, possible exception of Luke, should they be grudging when the Gentiles respond? Remember the Jerusalem Council? Oh, my gosh. It really takes a lot of argumentation to get them to accept what Paul and Silas come back and tell them. You know, the Gentiles are receiving the Spirit.

The Gentiles are heirs to the same salvation as us. Peter comes back and says, look, the sheet was let down. Arise, Peter, kill and eat.

Oh, Lord, nothing unclean. He says, what God has declared clean, let no man call common. This is the outworking of pride.

It is the outworking of exclusivity and partiality and failing to respond to the revelation of God, right? That's what you have in Jonah. And so there is this mercy in God's judgment. If people do turn, God said 40 days and Nineveh will be destroyed.

Is that not a... I don't know what you do if you're Reformed. And God says yet 40 days and Nineveh will be destroyed. I mean, you know, if you're a hardcore six-point Calvinist, yikes, because it didn't happen.

God issued a decree and the decree did not happen. What do you do with that? Did God change

His mind? Oh, my gosh. The theological wreckage that that causes is a sea in which many books have floated.

But here's the point. There is mercy in judgment. The smallest turning, all these people did was put on old clothes and sprinkle themselves with ashes.

It doesn't say they erected an altar to God. They didn't mend their ways. They didn't change their society.

They didn't have a big purge. They didn't send all their Jewish wives back to Israel the way Israel is going to do the reverse later on. All they did was, they said, we have offended this God.

We need to respond to this warning. They responded. Because of the response, God's mercy comes.

There is mercy in judgment. Hosea, there's love in judgment. Joel, there is repentance available in judgment.

Change your mind. It's never too late. If you're breathing air, God still has a plan.

It's not too late. Amos, there is justice in judgment. Don't blame the judgment.

Blame the occasions for which it comes. Obadiah, where does that judgment fall? On those who are proud. God resists the proud.

Who is the judgment going to be removed from? Jonah? Those who turn, who have the humility. To put yourself in sackcloth and ashes when you're the citizens of the capital of the Assyrian Empire, that's humility. Setting aside your royal robes.

Setting aside your highfalutin attitude. This is something Jonah could have learned from, yes? This is something Israel could have learned from. The Jews, the Pharisees could have learned from.

In Jesus' day, God resists the proud. Gives grace to the humble. There's mercy in judgment.

They couldn't see it. Pride blinded them. Remember the seven woes on the Pharisees? Read that.

It's all about pride. It's all about breaking the second great summary commandment. Love your neighbor.

Who is my neighbor? Good Samaritan story. Just couldn't catch it. Couldn't change their minds.

Okay, and that brings us to Micah. And by the way, there is restoration even in Jonah. Because Jonah gets judged for disobedience.

But what does he do? Down in the depths of Sheol, in the gates of darkness down there,

seaweed wrapped around his head. What does he do? He changes his mind. And he gets the deliverance of regurgitation.

Even disobedient, recalcitrant, stubborn Jonah gets delivered to prophesy another day. So there is deliverance. That's 210 of Jonah.

But the theme is in the last part, the very last part. God says, should I not have mercy on this city where there are so many children and so many people? Micah. What's our memory aid for Micah? It's the C in the middle.

Covetousness. The big problem there is selfishness. Selfishness.

Pride leads to the endless pursuit of self-gratification. You have some and you want more. You are willing to deceive.

Covetousness and deceit are the two charges that are made in the book of Micah. Micah. Micah-yah.

Micaiah is a variation on this. Who is like the Lord? Mi is who? Cah is like. Yah is Yahweh.

Who is like the Lord? He sees into the heart. He knows our motivations. His word cuts to the quick.

Cuts to the dividing asunder. And judges the thoughts and intents of our heart. What does he see in his heart? They are not judged for practices alone but for what those practices reflect.

It is covetousness which is an attitude. It is deceit which is a mindset. The heart is deceitful above all things.

Desperately wicked. Who can understand it? Jeremiah says. So Micah covetousness and deceit.

And interestingly Micah who is a contemporary of Hosea and Amos. I hesitate to give you this memory aid but I am going to anyway. Because it is Ham.

H-A-M. Hosea, Amos and Micah are all prophets that we nail down as prophesying in the time of Isaiah and following. Isaiah down through about four kings in Judah to Hezekiah.

Hosea, Amos and Micah. Ham. H-A-M.

Those three are contemporaries. Now, here is a tough one. See if you can do it.

What was the theme we said was in Hosea? Something in judgment? There is love in judgment, right? What was Amos' theme? The shepherd. There is justice in judgment. Hosea, there is love available even in judgment.

God has not forgotten those who He is able to love. God loves the world, right? But He is going to judge the world by and large. Which ones does He not have to judge ultimately? Those who

turn in faith to Christ, right? John 3.16. Hosea, there is love in judgment.

Amos, there is justice in judgment. So guess what the theme of Micah, their contemporary is? He hits them both almost equally. There is love in judgment, but there is justice in judgment.

And that's what Micah is all about. These people who are covetous and deceitful are going to be judged. But don't miss the fact that there is still salvation available.

God's love can still be expressed. It's equal parts love and justice in Micah. Your theme verse here is in chapter 6, verses 6-8.

Micah 6, 6-8. Just a representative sample here. With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousands, rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you? Now, stop right there. Let me ask you again. What was the theme in Hosea? Love in judgment.

Hosea. Hosea. I still love you even though you've committed adultery.

I will take you back, Gomer. Right? There is still love there. There was love that established that covenant relationship.

And the love does not go. Hosea. You've got to remember it.

Love, even in judgment. Joel, you've got your locus. Then Amos, justice in judgment.

What's the theme in Micah? Both of them. And how do you know that? Look at here. He has shown you, O man, Micah 6, 8, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? As we come to the sixth of these twelve minor prophets, that's the summary of the whole enchilada right there. What does the Lord require of you but to be like Him? To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk in humility with your God. Doing justice and loving mercy, that's what you do in the second commandment territory.

Love your neighbor as yourself. Be just. Be kind.

Put the interests of others ahead of your own. Right? Walk humbly with your God. Don't commit adultery.

Don't violate your relationship with God. Justice. Love.

In that relationship with God and with one another. Hosea begins it. Micah sums it up in those first six writing minor prophets.

Make sense? Okay. Now, we're at the insertion, which I sort of arbitrarily put in, just because I like to break them six and six, of our four major prophets. That's Isaiah, Jeremiah, with Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

Next time, we're going to look at those second six. But remember now, we don't want to just remember them and what the gist of them is. We want to answer the question for ourselves, So what? Why is Hosea in my Bible? Why should I pay any attention to it? It's an Old Testament prophet writing to Old Testament people.

It's the nation of Israel. They went out 2,700 years ago. What does it mean to me? One more time now as we close.

The theme in Hosea is? It's that marriage. We've been unfaithful. There's adultery involved, but God still loves.

There is still love, even in judgment. Joel, it's the locust. That judgment is coming.

And what is our theme there? You've got to change your mind. If you change your mind, that restoration can still happen. God is going to restore Jerusalem, even though he's judged it.

He's knocked the temple down. There's another temple coming. That's what Ezekiel spends seven chapters describing.

Remember that? Ezekiel 40-46, I think, is all about that new temple. Judah was judged horribly. Joel says the locusts are coming, and they're going to leave not a stalk standing.

But there is restoration. Repentance is available. Hosea, Joel, Amos.

Amos is the shepherd. The shepherd loves, but it doesn't keep him from being just. The shepherd's got the rod and the staff.

And that keeps the sheep in line. There is justice. There's a reason for judgment.

Obadiah, Obed-Edom. Edom represents pride. God resists the proud.

He gives grace to the humble. That grace is reflected in Obadiah. There is restoration.

Right at the end of the book there, verses 17-20, he talks about what a wonderful restoration there is. Jonah, Nineveh. When God chooses to bless others because they change their mind, you can't be sitting up there under the broom tree grouching and cursing the worm that eats your tree.

Right? He's ingrown. It's all about him. I had shade and now I lost it.

Here's an entire city of people that have been delivered by the grace of God. Jonah can't see it. Here's the Gentiles, to whom God has extended salvation, and the Pharisees and the scribes and the Sanhedrin and the leadership in Israel can't see it in Jesus' day and in the apostles' day.

Jonah. Micah. Sums up the previous five, especially Hosea and Amos.

H-A-M. The love and the justice. There is love.

It is always balanced with justice. Justice is tempered by love. One can't exist without the other.

You can't have unbridled love with no justice. You can't have justice that's not tempered with loving mercy, sensitivity, recognition, especially when there is, in the middle there, Joel, repentance, a change of mind. God honors our change of mind.

We've got to be looking for and encouraging and blowing on the embers of that change of mind in one another. Well, those are our first six minor prophets. It's so important for us to see them in their historic context, God's constant appeal to His people.

All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and stiff-necked people because God still loves them. And the justice and the judgment is a last resort. It's a wonderful encouragement to us.

It's a motivation to get on the right side of that stick. I want to be up there at the handle. I want to be there where God's hand can grab me.

And if He does tap me, it's a short stick, not the long rod of crushing judgment. Well, we'll pick up here with Nahum and enter into the closing days of the historical record of the Old Testament and look at the post-exilic message to God's people. The final words before the Lord Jesus comes is what we're going to be seeing in the coming couple of weeks.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You that every word of it has come from You.

Every scripture is inspired by You and is profitable to us. We pray that Your Holy Spirit will enliven it and make it flame and make it live in our souls to purge us, to refine us, to show us where we fail, to encourage us where we are making progress, and enable us to do that in our fellowship with one another so that we can all grow toward the standard of a mature man to that which brings honor and glory to our Lord Jesus Christ and is pleasing in Your sight. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.