

Bible Study # 72
July 9, 1991
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Minor Prophets Series—Amos, Obadiah and Jonah

We are getting into the books of Amos, Obadiah and Jonah this evening. We're taking three books in the Minor Prophets. Primarily, we are going to focus on Amos. It is the longest of the books; there are nine chapters. Obadiah is one short little chapter; Jonah is fairly short with four chapters. **We are going to focus in on these books this evening, but primarily on Amos.**

Amos was a prophet who prophesied about the same time as Obadiah and Jonah. In fact, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah all prophesied in the same general time period. Roughly speaking, they were all contemporaries. There is a little bit of variation, but they all overlapped some. In fact, not only were there those six Minor Prophets, but also the prophet Isaiah. So there were actually seven prophets of God who flourished at that same time period. As I mentioned last Bible study, their period of prophecy was at a time when the nation of Northern Israel had reached sort of a height or peak of its prosperity.

Northern Israel had its beginnings at the time of King Solomon's death when the kingdom of 12-tribed Israel split. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, took the southern tribe Judah in Jerusalem and portions of Benjamin and Levi. The northern ten tribes originally went with Jeroboam, the son of Nebat who put himself forward as king and founded a dynasty that continued for a short time and then was replaced by other dynasties.

There was a lot of turnover in Northern Israel. But finally in the early part of the eighth century, there arose a period of prosperity in Northern Israel and in Judah. There were two very lengthy reigns: King Jeroboam II, the king of Israel reigned for about 40 years and King Uzziah of Judah reigned for a comparable period of time. They both reigned in the neighborhood of 40 years. They were roughly contemporary—not exactly, but for a considerable period of time. Their periods of reign overlapped 30 to 35 years. Since there were monarchs who were in that position for a period of time, it was a time of stability for Israel and Judah.

The Hebrew states gained control of the major trade routes at that particular point in time, and as a result, there was commercial prosperity that began to build up both in Israel and in Judah.

This produced not only material benefits, but also various problems. As a commercial civilization grew and thrived, there were also difficulties that came in. A greater and greater percentage of people moved off the land and into the cities in search of jobs.

In effect, it was not dissimilar to what we have experienced in the course of the 20th century in terms of the number of families who have moved off the farms and into the cities. In fact, next Bible study when we study the book of Micah, we will go into a little more detail and depth on the background and you will see an amazing parallel between eighth-century Judah and Israel and 20th-century America and Britain. It's interesting because you see that when you put the same people in the same circumstances, they tend to do the same thing over and over and over. There is predictability to human nature.

Prophecy and history are simply the same thing seen from different directions. There is a time setting of the background of these prophets. As Israel, and to a lesser extent Judah, went through some of these things, there were problems that were engendered. There were various things that happened and there was a consequence that came about. God raised up these prophets. There were seven who flourished at this time—from the beginning of the eighth century down to the captivity and shortly beyond. God raised up these prophets to give a warning at a time when Israel seemed to be reaching a pinnacle of power. God raised up His prophets to sound an alarm, to sound a warning to the nation. The nation of ancient Israel did not heed that warning.

We are going to see that what Amos had to say was not popularly received. As we study through the Scriptures, we find that God's prophets have never been very favorably received. A little later we are going to notice one exception that stands out because it is such an exception. But, as a rule, God's prophets have not been popularly received. Their message has not been popular because God's prophets have never taken a poll to find out what was popular so they could go and preach it. They preached what God said, and that's enough to get you into trouble. After all, Jesus Christ was crucified for it, wasn't He?

We find that Amos was not very popular as a result of what he had to say. One of the things they told him was, 'Why don't you leave? Just head back to where you came from. You came from Judah. Go! We don't need you here in Israel. We don't need you here in Samaria; this is the king's city, the king's palace and temple. We don't need you here and we don't like what you

have to say.’ They didn’t like it because it was not a popular and pleasant message.

There is a great deal of parallel between what we find in our nation and what we find at this time in the eighth century. **The events that served as a background of Amos’ writings served as a prelude and background to the things that set the stage for the Assyrian captivity and deportation of Northern Israel.** The same things that set the prelude for the captivity and deportation of ancient Israel set the same prelude for the captivity and deportation of modern Israel. As we go through the book of Amos, we are going to find that the message Amos had went far beyond his time and his day. **Amos had a message for his day, but the impact of his message went beyond eighth-century Israel.**

As we get into the study, we might notice briefly the time setting in Amos to sort of set the stage.

Amos 4:12, “‘Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel.’”

Amos 5:15, “Hate evil, love good; establish justice in the gate. It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.”

Verse 18, “Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord...”

Verse 20, “Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light? Is it not very dark, and with no brightness in it?”

He talks about the calamities and the upset conditions in the heavens.

Amos 8:9, “‘And it shall come to pass in that day,’ says the Lord God, ‘that I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight.’”

Amos 9:8-9, “‘Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,’ says the Lord. ‘For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.’”

Verses 11-15, “‘On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,’ says the Lord who does this thing. ‘Behold, 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 shall

drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,’ says the Lord your God.”

Obviously, the time setting of the end of the book of Amos goes down to the time when Christ is going to return. There are certain ones who read Amos and disregard the fact that much of the Bible is prophecy. They want to read the prophets and say, ‘This is all about long-dead nations and long-dead peoples, and it certainly doesn’t have any connection with us today.’ Well, has God raised up the tabernacle of David? Have you seen David walking around anywhere here lately? Has David been raised up? Has Israel been re-gathered? Have they built up the old waste places? Have they been planted in their own land, never again to be pulled up?

There are those who don’t understand the identity of Israel. They think this is just talking about the Jews and that they have gone back to Israel after World War II. Do you think they are planted in their land and are never going to go forth again? Well, go back and read the book of Zechariah.

Zechariah 14:1-2, “Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.” It talks about the inhabitants of the modern-day state of Israel in the Middle East (the Jewish state) going into captivity.

It is going to take Jesus Christ coming back as King of kings and Lord of lords to redeem them and to bring them back.

Verses 3-4, “Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives....” We are going to see that the nation that has been re-gathered in the Middle East is not all of Israel. They are the nation of Judah, the remnant of Judah. There are two nations.

Amos was from Judah, but he went up to Israel to prophesy. Israel was taken into captivity over 100 years before Judah went into captivity. Israel was taken into captivity by a different nation (the Assyrians) and to a different place.

II Kings 17:6, we are told, “In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.” This is in the area up between the Black and Caspian Sea.

Judah was taken into captivity by the Babylonians and settled in the southern Mesopotamian Valley in the area of Babylon and the environs of greater Babylon. They were in a different location. It was a totally different group of people and a different place.

Amos clearly focuses in on events that will culminate with the return of Jesus Christ and the re-gathering of Israel. The message that Amos had, though it is set against the background of his day and the circumstances in which Israel found itself in his day, contains a message that has implications down to our time today.

The first chapter or so of Amos are prophecies against the Gentile nations.

Amos 2:4-5 would be prophecies against Judah. Then the rest of chapter 2 would be a prophecy against Israel.

Chapters 3 and 4 prophesy punishment on Israel. Chapter 5 is Israel’s captivity.

Chapter 6 is Israel’s complacent attitude. You’d almost think Amos was talking a lot about Israel! Chapter 7 makes for a little bit of a historical inset.

Chapter 8 then goes back again to Israel being condemned for its greed.

Chapter 9 is the final punishment and millennial restoration.

Israel reached a high point militarily and economically during the time of Jeroboam II. After his death, the stability and prosperity of Israel ceased. Within a matter of about 40 to 45 years from the death of Jeroboam II, Israel went from being on top to being on the bottom. Then the Assyrians ultimately invaded and took them captive.

Amos 1:1, we are introduced to Amos, “The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam [II] the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.” Tekoa was a little village in Judah. It was about six miles south of Bethlehem. Yet Amos’ ministry was primarily in Northern Israel. He was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit (Amos 7:14).

He was given a message that he was to go to Israel. We find in chapter 1:3-5 he starts out by talking about Damascus, Gaza (v. 6), Ashdod, Ekron, Philistine (v. 8), Tyre (v. 9), Edom (v.

11), Teman (v. 12), the children of Ammon (v. 13) and the Moabites (Amos 2:1).

You find they are all Middle Eastern nations. Even today, Damascus is the modern-day capital of Syria. He starts out with a focus on the Middle East, on the modern nation of Syria and on the area down in the Gaza strip.

There’s an area called the Gaza Strip. You know what they are having over there? They are having riots and trouble. They are having what the Palestinians have called the “Entefada.” The areas of Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron are in the same area down there. The word “Palestinian” is derived from “Philistine.” So you have problems in Syria (Damascus). You have problems with the Palestinians. You have problems in Lebanon; Tyre is located in the modern area of Lebanon. Edom is addressed in verses 11-12. Teman is a subdivision of Edom; Edom basically is a reference to Turkey. Ammon (v. 13) would certainly refer to Jordan. Moab (Amos 2:1-2) would be portions of Jordan and Iraq.

So, what do you have addressed? –The whole Middle East! Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, the Palestinians—that sort of sounds like today’s newspaper, doesn’t it? –The same bunch. God named them off—every one of them. And what are they doing? They are having problems and there are going to be more problems. God is going to deal with it. He talks about some of the problems and some of the warfare that is going to break out over there.

Amos 1:4, “But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad.” That refers to Damascus, the capital of Syria. It talks about sending a fire there. That’s a pretty good description of launching some missiles. When war breaks out over there, you had better believe there is going to be fire sent over Damascus. When the Jews unleash some of what they have, there’s going to be a regular firestorm in Damascus.

It talks about the various problems that are going to come, the warfare and strife that are going to occur. These events were pre-staged in ancient times, and we are going to find parallels in the modern times. There are events that are going to bring about a European presence in the Middle East. There’s going to be a warfare that is going to break out in the Middle East that is going to set the stage for European intervention. Some of these things are addressed in the first chapter of Amos.

Then he addresses Judah in chapter 2.

Amos 2:4-5, “Thus says the Lord: ‘For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not

turn away its punishment, because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept His commandments. Their lies lead them astray, lies after which their fathers walked. But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.” You are going to see full-scale warfare breaking out in the Middle East. It talks about fire coming on the palaces of each of these areas. That’s talking about missile attacks. They are going to be launching missile attacks and there’s going to be fire coming on all those places. That’s going to set the stage for European intervention in the Middle East.

Verse 6, “Thus says the Lord: ‘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.’” Now if Judah and Israel are the same ones (the same people), why is Israel addressed separately here?

This is why the Protestants don’t understand. Even though Jimmy Swaggart and some of these others may talk about prophecy from time to time, they don’t understand prophecy. They can’t begin to understand prophecy. They can’t understand any of the Old Testament prophets because they don’t understand the identity of Israel. You can waste your time listening to some of these characters or reading what they write. They may know in a general, vague way that Christ is going to return, but they don’t really understand what He is going to do when He gets here. They certainly don’t understand the events that are going to lead up to that. They don’t understand events that set the stage for it because they don’t understand the identity of the people addressed. They don’t know how the United States and Britain and the Commonwealth nations fit into prophecy. They don’t understand that because they don’t know where we are identified.

Why is God going to deal with Israel? What is reflected here? It talks about greed and materialism.

Verse 6, he says, “...I will not turn away its punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals.”

There is sort of a play on words. In ancient times, there was a custom of sealing a legal agreement where one pulled off his shoe and handed it to the other.

Go back to the book of Ruth and read the account of Boaz when he made the agreement with old “What’s his name” about Ruth (Ruth 4:7-9). I refer to him as “What’s his name” because he was an individual who was unwilling

to do what God said. So his name was blotted out of the genealogy. It doesn’t give you his name in the book of Ruth. The name of the fellow who was actually the closer kin than Boaz was blotted out. So he goes down through history as old “What’s his name.”

You read how, when Boaz made the agreement with him, he pulled off his shoe. That was a custom showing that a legal transaction was rendered. The Jewish commentary brings out that the expression, “selling the poor for a pair of shoes,” had to do with taking advantage of people under the “color” of the law. It’s pretty descriptive of some of the modern lawyers and “shysters” who use the law to their own advantage. It may be justice, but it’s not justice with equality. It is a matter of people using the law in a manipulative way to dispossess and take advantage of others who are maybe not in a position to defend themselves. God indicts the nation for its greed, its obsession with materialism and immorality.

Verse 7, ““They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor, and pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go in to the same girl, to defile My holy name.”” It talks about greed, materialism, sexual looseness and immorality. These are problems for which He indicts modern Israel.

Amos 3:3, ““Can two walk together unless they are agreed?”” This is a fundamental principle. If we are going to walk with God, we have to agree with God. As a nation, if we want God’s blessings and benefits, we have to agree with God. As a nation, any agreement that we ever had with God has been very quickly left behind. It’s incredible the things that people want to do. They want to rewrite the rules. There was a great “hue and cry” in the media over the proposal that was in the Presbyterian Church to redefine morality. Basically, it was to put the stamp of approval on immorality, whether it was fornication, adultery, homosexuality or anything. People don’t like the idea of God telling them what to do.

Verse 7, ““Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.”” Before God intervenes in world events, God sends His servants to proclaim and announce that intervention. God doesn’t just do something in a corner. Inevitably, when you look through the Scriptures, God sends His servants to announce and proclaim that intervention and to announce and proclaim the need to repent. When God gets ready to do something, He is going to make it plain.

Verse 9, “Proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say: ‘Assemble on the mountains of Samaria; see great tumults in her midst, and the oppressed within her.’” Samaria was the capital of Northern Israel. Samaria is used as symbolic of the ten tribes of Israel. They are defined as being riddled with great tumults, as well as a lot of oppression. A great tumult means a lot of internal civil strife.

One of the things that is going to rend this nation is civil strife and discord. We are going to come unraveled in our major cities with civil strife. When things start getting really serious economically, you are going to find some major civil strife and unrest in our cities. God talks about dealing with these things.

Amos 4:1, “Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, ‘Bring wine, let us drink!’” He is not talking about cows in the field. God is not indicting cows for their sins. This is a reference to people; specifically, the reference is to a “fat-cow” society. The Jewish commentary brings it out as the women who encourage and nag their husbands causing them to be cruel in getting ahead.

Verses 2-3, “The Lord God has sworn by His holiness: ‘Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will take you away with fishhooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. You will go out through broken walls, each one straight ahead of her, and you will be cast into Harmon,’ says the Lord.”

The term “Harmon” in the Hebrew would better be rendered as a place name. It is a reference to Armenia, which is where much of Northern Israel went into captivity.

Verse 6, “Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities [He is not talking about good dental hygiene; he is saying there won’t be anything to eat.] and lack of bread in all your places; yet you have not returned to Me,’ says the Lord.”

Verses 7-9, “I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered. So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me,’ says the Lord. ‘I blasted you with blight and mildew....’”

He talks about upset weather conditions. Some places are not getting any rain and other places

are getting too much rain. It sounds familiar, doesn’t it? Have you seen any mildew around lately? He is talking about the upset conditions and the things that are going to endanger the food production because you can be wiped out with too much rain or too little. That’s going to happen. We are obviously not in the throes of some massive famine right now, but that doesn’t mean it won’t happen. It simply means that it is not yet that time. It is not here yet.

We are in the midst of upset weather conditions, but it has not yet taken that serious a toll. Some farmers in this area have taken a toll because it has been so wet and they haven’t been able to get into their fields and do the things that they need to do. It depends on how long it goes on as to how bad the toll is. One of the things we have to realize is how vulnerable we are. We are dependent on what God gives—rain, sun and wind. Man likes to think that he is so much in charge of his own life and yet everything around us depends on what God provides and gives.

Verse 10, “I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt....” We find described in Amos 4 the drought, famine and disease that are going to be national punishment.

Then he talks about the captivity that is going to come on the house of Israel.

Amos 5:1, “Hear this word which I take up against you, this lamentation, O house of Israel.” Here’s a lamentation for the house of Israel.

Verse 3, “...‘The city that goes out by a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which goes out by a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel.’” Ten percent of those who go into captivity are going to survive and be alive at the end of the tribulation.

Verse 4, “...‘Seek Me and live....’”

Verse 5, “But do not seek Bethel, nor enter Gilgal, nor pass over to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nothing.” Don’t look to the places that you have been looking to.

Verse 6, “‘Seek the Lord and live....’”

Verses 11-13, “Therefore, because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him, though you have built houses of hewn stone, yet you shall not dwell in them; You have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine from them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins. You afflict the just and take bribes; you divert the poor from justice at the gate. Therefore the prudent keep silent at that time, for it is an evil time.” God talks about His judgment that is going to come.

Verse 21, “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies.” Some want to take that out of context and say, ‘God hated all those old feast days; you shouldn’t keep them.’ Did God say, ‘I despise My Feast Days’? He says nothing about despising His Feast Days. He said, “I despise *your* feast days.”

Which feast days did Northern Israel keep? Go back to I Kings 12:25-33. What was the very first thing Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, did when he established an independent kingdom in Northern Israel? He changed the festivals. He substituted man-made feasts for God’s Feasts. Israel never again kept the right days.

God hates our feasts—Christmas, Easter and all that junk. He hates the things that Israel does using His name. People want to invent their own religion and then attach God’s name to it. Why don’t they call it by their own name and quit calling it Christianity? It doesn’t have anything to do with Christ. Some of these churches want to perform homosexual marriages. Well, call it by their name. Why drag God into it? Why try to bring Jesus Christ and the Bible into it. Why not call it the Sodomite religion or the Church of Gomorrah? Why bring God into it?

Amos 6:1, “Woe to you who are at ease in Zion [They say, ‘Oh, nothing is going to happen to us.’] and trust in Mount Samaria [Modern Israel; Samaria was the capital of the house of Israel. People trust in our great power and strength.] notable persons in the chief nation [first rank among the nations], to whom the house of Israel comes!” Here are a people who put great trust and confidence in our great national power. This is the area to which the house of Israel came.

Verse 3, “Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, who cause the seat of violence to come near....” Oh, they think bad times are way far off. They say, ‘We will just elect the right guy and everything is going to be great.’

Verse 4, “Who lie on beds of ivory, stretch out on your couches, eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall.” They are really enjoying the good things of life. This is talking about a very materialistic self-indulgent society.

Verses 5-6, “Who chant to the sound of stringed instruments, and invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; who drink wine from bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” They are really boozing it up, drinking wine by the bowlful. They are caught up in sort of an “eat, drink and be merry; wine, women and song.” There is nothing wrong with

eating a good meal or with enjoying a glass of wine or good music. It is not talking about these things in moderation and in a proper way. It is talking about a society that is obsessed with revelry and partying. It’s very descriptive, “...[they] are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” They are not bothered by the things that are going on. They are not bothered by sin. They are all caught up in materialism, in listening to the newest group and getting high or stoned, getting what they can get. They are not concerned about the problems of the nation. They are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph.

Verse 7, “Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives, and those who recline at banquets shall be removed.” God says those who have that attitude will be in the front of the line when the Germans march them off.

Verse 14, “‘But behold, I will raise up a nation against you. O house of Israel,’ says the Lord of hosts; ‘And they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath to the Valley of the Arabah.’”

Amos 7 is a little bit of an inset. The people accused Amos of being a traitor. They said the nation couldn’t put up with him. They wanted him to leave.

Amos 7:10-13, “Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, ‘Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. For this Amos has said: “Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive from their own land.”’ Then Amaziah said to Amos: ‘Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, and there prophesy. But never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is the royal residence.’”

They said, ‘We don’t need your kind around here. We were getting along just fine. We like our religion, and all our preachers say nice things and tell us how good we are. We like that and we’re comfortable with it. Here you come along saying that we are going to go into captivity. You are saying God indicts this nation and He’s going to punish this nation. You have conspired against us. You are a traitor. You shouldn’t say things like that. Why don’t you get out of here! Go someplace else. Get you another place to preach. We don’t need you around here.’

I’ll tell you what brethren, before the end of this age we are going to find ourselves in the same position because when the time comes for God’s message of warning to really be “let loose” and

to really shake this nation, we are going to find about the same reception that Amos and all of God's other prophets have ever gotten. Amos didn't back off from the situation. He said he didn't ask for the job. God put him there and told him to go prophesy unto the house of Israel.

Verses 15-17, "Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, "Go, prophesy to My people Israel." Now therefore, hear the word of the Lord: You say, "Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not spout against the house of Isaac." Therefore thus says the Lord: "Your wife shall be a harlot in the city; your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; your land shall be divided by survey line; you shall die in a defiled land; and Israel shall surely be led away captive from his own land.""

How do you think they liked that? When they got through reading Amos, they said, 'We think you had better get out of here, buddy. We don't like your kind around here telling us those things.'

Amos didn't "tuck-tail" and run. He looked them in the eye, pointed his finger in their face and he said, 'Let me tell you something. I didn't ask for this job. I am here because God told me to be here, and I have a message for you. Your wife is going to be a harlot in the city and your sons and daughters are going to die by the sword. You are going into captivity.' Amos was not very popular when he said that.

Amos 8:5, "...Making the ephah small and the shekel large, falsifying the balances by deceit." That means selling less and less for more and more. The ephah is what they are selling; the shekel is what they are getting in return. So they are selling less and less for more and more. What they are describing kind of sounds like inflation.

Verse 6, "That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals..." Who gets hurt the worst by inflation? The elderly and people on fixed incomes. They are the ones who really suffer the most. The widow and fatherless are those who are least able to defend themselves. So God indicts a nation whose priorities are greed and materialism.

He talks about the events and things that are going to come.

Verse 11, "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord God, "That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." They didn't want Amos to tell them those things. Amos told them, 'The time is going to come when you won't be hearing them because I will

be gone and there is going to be a famine in the land. When things really start getting bad, you are going to wish somebody were around to tell you what's happening.'

Amos 9 focuses on God's intervention.

Amos 9:8-9, "Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," says the Lord. 'For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.'"

In other words, when ancient Israel went into captivity they are known in history as the lost tribes of Israel. Were they going to be any lost tribes of Israel? Were they going to be the lost ten tribes? To whom were they lost? Did God lose them? Did God forget where they were? Did they get lost in the shuffle and God hasn't been able to find them? So He's not going to fulfill all the prophecies of the Bible because the tribes of Israel got lost? They went into captivity, were sifted among all the nations and they got lost? No! He said, 'I will sift you among the nations, but I am not going to lose you.' "...as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground." He said, 'I am going to collect all of you.' Israel went into captivity anciently and was sifted through the nations. Yet at the end time (the right time and place), they are collected. God prophesied that.

Verse 11 talks about David being resurrected. It talks about the time of the Millennium, the time of plenty.

Verse 13, "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, 'when the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.'" It discusses a time when the bounty is going to be so much that those who are ready to plow the field have to wait on the ones who are harvesting. The harvest is so great they are overwhelmed trying to get all the harvest in.

Verses 14-15, "I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," says the Lord your God."

It describes a time of great abundance and great plenty. It describes a time when Israel is going to be re-gathered and the old waste places rebuilt—

a time when they will be planted in their own land, never to be taken out forcefully again. That's a prophecy that has not been fulfilled yet. It's a prophecy for the end time. If that's been fulfilled, when was it fulfilled? When was Israel planted in their own land never again to be removed? That's yet future.

Obadiah is a little short book. It has one chapter. There isn't any clear proof in the book of Obadiah exactly when it was written. **It is primarily a prophecy against the Edomites who anciently dwelled nearby.** The Edomites were descended from Esau. There are various groups of people who are descended from the Edomites. One particular branch, Teman, is addressed here in Obadiah.

Verse 9, "Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed..." Teman was one of the major tribes of Edom. We would trace back the modern-day nation of Turkey primarily to the Teman branch of Esau. Turkey, up until after World War I, was known as the Ottoman Empire. It was spelled very similar to this. This was an ancient name. They were the Ottoman Turks. There are many different kinds of Turks, some of which don't have any connection with Esau. There was an area in Soviet central Asia that was ancient Turkistan, and there were various peoples in Soviet central Asia that were ancient Turkistan. There were various peoples who lived there. The generic name "Turks" was applied to anyone in that general area. Many of these peoples were unrelated to one another. They lived in a general geographic area.

The Ottoman Turks or Temanite Turks descended from Esau. Back a little less than 1,000 years ago (back about 800 or 900 years ago), Turkistan came out and invaded the Middle Eastern area. Over a period beginning about 1200 A.D. on up to about 1450 A.D., they moved across and conquered what is now the modern-day nation of Turkey. They forced out the Greeks and other peoples who were previously there. They conquered a great deal of the Middle East and on up even into Europe and the Balkan areas. Then in the aftermath of World War I, they were sort of pushed back and forced into the Asia Minor peninsula, which took the name Turkey. They were a people that had the reputation in the Middle East as the most brutal warrior peoples that the Middle East had ever seen. They were known for their brutality and for their oppressive regime—and they are noted for that in the Middle East today. There aren't any people in the Middle East that are more feared and hated by the Arabs and all the Middle

Eastern peoples, even the Armenians. In fact, the Armenians to this day nurse a great grudge against the Turks because of the massive slaughter of Armenians right around the time of World War I. They were noted for wanton brutal violence and that sort of thing. They ruled the Middle East in that way.

The Edomites are addressed here in Obadiah. It is a prophecy against them.

Verses 9 and 18 basically describe an annihilation (a destruction) of the nation.

Verse 9, "Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau may be cut off by slaughter."

Verse 18, "The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble; they shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau, for the Lord had spoken."

We find that Jeremiah bears in a little bit more on this.

Jeremiah 49:10-11, "But I have made Esau bare; I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself. His descendants are plundered, his brethren and his neighbors, and he is no more. Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in Me."

When you tie in Obadiah with Jeremiah, you find that basically the women and children will be preserved, but for all practical purposes, the adult male population is going to be pretty well exterminated. There's evidence of that here.

Obadiah 10-14, "For your violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. In the day that you stood on the other side—in the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem—even you were as one of them. But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity; nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of My people in the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity. You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped..."

The crossroads is very likely Turkey that sits astride one of the major crossways—the

Dardanelles—that controls their entrance from Asia to Europe.

It describes treachery, deceit and betrayal that are going to take place and severe punishment that is going to come as a result.

Verse 21, “Then saviors [plural] shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.” Christ and the saints with Him are ultimately going to return to Mount Zion. At that time, there will be saviors that will come to judge the Mount of Esau. Saviors (plural)—that’s Christ and those with Him who will finally bring the way of salvation and set things straight. It will be the time when the Kingdom is the Lord’s.

Obadiah is a short little book; but nevertheless, it is an insight into some of the events that are transpiring and will transpire in that area.

Jonah is also a very short little book. The story of Jonah is a little different than the other prophets. There is a lot that can be learned from Jonah. **There’s a lot that we can learn in terms of the attitude that we need to have as God’s people and doing God’s work.** Jonah was given a job.

Jonah 1:1-3, “Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.’ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.”

If you look at a map, you will find that from where Jonah was Nineveh was one direction and Tarshish was the other. Nineveh was to the northeast and Tarshish was to the west. Tarshish was a city on the coast of Spain. So instead of heading east, Jonah headed west. God told Jonah He wanted him to go to Nineveh; Jonah hopped on the first boat going the other direction. He did not want to go to Nineveh. That is almost an understatement.

He did not want to go and give Nineveh God’s message. That’s fine. God has ways of getting your attention. If God wants you to do something and you don’t want to do it, God can get your attention. God says, ‘Go here,’ so you take off and go the other direction. God can get your attention. So Jonah hopped a boat, and here they are sailing along the Mediterranean when a storm comes up. Jonah goes to sleep down in the bottom of the boat. The storm was “going” and they thought the ship was about to break up. All the soldiers were hollering out in these various

languages to their gods. Finally, the shipmaster came down there, saw Jonah asleep, and said, ‘We need everything going for us that we can get. You had better wake up and pray to your God, too. We’re about to drown here.’

Because they decided that they needed to find out who brought this evil upon them, they cast lots. They were a superstitious lot, but God used that. When they cast the lot, it fell on Jonah. God sort of guided that. He doesn’t generally involve Himself in that sort of thing, but He wanted old Jonah pointed out. They asked, ‘What have you done to get us into all this trouble?’ Jonah told them. So they threw him overboard. As soon as they did, the waters became as calm as it could be.

Verses 15-16, “So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.” Boy, you had better believe they got religious in a hurry. They came up with a real “foxhole religion.”

Verse 17, “Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” People sometimes wonder what kind of fish it was and how Jonah could have survived in the fish. Was it a whale? Well, it says right here what kind of fish it was. It was a special Jonah-fish. It says the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. How could Jonah have survived in the belly of the fish? –Because the fish was prepared for Jonah to survive. This was a special fish that had been prepared to swallow up Jonah—a special Jonah-eating fish. It was what it was designed to do, so it did it very well. The fish swallowed up Jonah, and Jonah was down there three days and three nights.

Jonah 2:1, “Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish’s belly.” You better believe he prayed. Here he was trying to get away from God and now he was awfully glad that God could find him. He was surely hoping that God could find him because he was down there in the belly of this fish and he had to do some serious praying. Sometimes people wonder what position we should get into and what’s the best position for prayer. Well, I don’t know. Jonah might have been in a variety of positions as this old fish was sailing through the water, just bouncing around. But I suspect that whatever position he was in was a good position to really be fervent because he was really crying out to God.

Verse 2, “And he said: ‘I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, and He answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice.’”

Just get the picture here.

Verse 5, “The waters encompassed me, even to my soul; the deep closed around me; weeds were wrapped around my head.” Here’s old Jonah down there. Fish smell bad enough from the outside; can you imagine what it smelled like from the inside? And old Jonah was down there covered with slimy seaweed. This fish was moving right along. He was zooming up through the Mediterranean and Black Sea. It came down and spit out old Jonah right there near Nineveh.

Verse 10, “So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.” Jonah had been praying for three days and three nights. The fish comes skidding to a stop right up there on the shore. The fish got indigestion really bad about this time, and out comes Jonah. I don’t know what else came up with Jonah, but he must not have been a pleasant-smelling individual. He was certainly not an attractive-looking sight when he sort of picked himself up off the beach.

Jonah 3:1-2, “Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.’”

Verse 3, this time Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh.

A few things had happened to change Jonah’s perspective. He wasn’t looking for the next boat out. When he considered what the alternatives were, going to Nineveh didn’t seem like such a bad deal. And to top it off, the Ninevehites (the Assyrians) worshipped Dagon, the fish god. If Jonah had just gone like God had told him to, he probably wouldn’t have been paid any attention to more than anything else. But by being delivered on the spot by this great fish that just kind of shows up and spews him out, this is their god that they worship. Here comes this great fish and a man pops out of it. They were pretty impressed. All of a sudden, Jonah had an audience that he wouldn’t have had before. So he comes through Nineveh, looking and smelling like something that a fish spit out.

Verses 4-5, “And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, ‘Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!’ So the people of Nineveh believed God [It scared them to death when they saw this and heard the message.] proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.”

Verses 6-7, “Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, ‘Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water.’” Everything and everyone was going to fast with typical German efficiency.

Verse 8, “But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.”

Even let the cows join in. I tell you what—if you didn’t feed a cow for three days and three nights, it will be crying out for all it could cry out, too. Can you imagine the commotion that must have been going on there by about the third day? All these people were wailing and lamenting and crying out to God. Since they didn’t even feed the livestock, you can imagine by the third day every cow was lowing and every sheep and goat and dog was howling. That must have been pandemonium around there. They even put sackcloth on the cows. It was real German efficiency. When they were going to repent, they were *all* going to repent, right down to the last cow. So they were all lined up there. And God looked down and He just kind of shook His head.

Verse 10, “Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.” God saw what they were doing and thought, ‘You know, you have to appreciate the effort.’ So He changed from what He was going to do and said, ‘I think I’m going to give you a little more time.’

Jonah 4:1, “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry.” You would think Jonah was happy because the people listened. No, Jonah wasn’t happy. Jonah wanted to see them “fry.” Jonah wanted to see them really “get it”—which is probably part of the reason he didn’t want to go down there to warn them to begin with. He was afraid something would happen and they might change.

The Ninevehites were great enemies of Israel. They were a threat. They were a great nation that was sort of rising up on the horizon. Jonah would really have liked to see them “get it.” ‘God is mad at them? Good! Let God just wipe them out.’ He didn’t like the Assyrians anyway. God told him to go down and preach to them. He

didn't want to go preach to them. God got his attention and sort of persuaded him. God gave him a little incentive. Jonah went down and he preached, but he didn't really want them to act on what he said. But sure enough, wouldn't you know it, he preaches to them and they repent. Jonah was displeased.

Verse 2, "So he prayed to the Lord, and said, 'Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, One who relents from doing harm.'"

He said to God, 'Isn't this what I told You? This is why I left and went to Tarshish. I knew You were a gracious God and merciful. I just knew as soon as I came down here and told them, You were going to feel sorry for them and let them "off the hook."'

Verse 3, "Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!" Jonah said, 'I wish you would just go ahead and let me die. I would rather die than live if this is the way it's going to be.' Jonah was really feeling sorry for himself. He didn't like it. Things hadn't turned out the way he had expected.

Verse 4, "Then the Lord said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?'" God said, 'Do you think you have a good reason for being mad?'

Verse 5, "So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city." He was just going to sit there on the mountaintop and watch. Countdown until the 40 days was over, but he was hoping that maybe God would change His mind and "fry" them. Jonah was just sitting out there.

Verse 6, "And the Lord God prepared a plant [KJV, "gourd"] and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful [KJV, "exceedingly glad"] for the plant."

We have a lot of special things in the book of Jonah. We have a special Jonah-eating fish, and here we have a special Jonah-shading gourd. It's not your ordinary run-of-the-mill gourd. It's a gourd that came up in a day's time. You talk about "Jack and the Beanstalk!" This is Jonah and the gourd stalk! And it grew just about as fast.

Old Jonah was sitting out here. The sun is beaming down. He's hot and mad. He's sitting there in a bad attitude. He's sweating and he's

watching to see what's going to happen. So this gourd begins to grow. It springs up very quickly and all the dense foliage comes out. He was very grateful because of the gourd. Now isn't this nice and pleasant. But God played a dirty, rotten trick on him.

Verse 7, "But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered." So God prepared a gourd and a worm. This was a special gourd-eating worm, and this worm had a very healthy appetite for a worm because the worm basically devoured the gourd. The gourd wasn't anymore.

Verse 8, "And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'" God sent in this extra hot desert wind and the sun was blistering. Jonah was miserable and passing out. He was really feeling sorry for himself. He wanted God to just go ahead and take his life.

Verse 9, "Then God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?' And he said, 'It is right for me to be angry, even to death!'" Jonah said, 'I am so mad; I wish You would just let me die.' God said, 'You really liked that gourd didn't you?' And Jonah said, 'You bet I did. That was my gourd and I liked it. It was nice. You took it away from me, and I am mad.'

Verse 10, "But the Lord said, 'You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night.'"

God said, 'You really felt sorry for that gourd. You're feeling all terrible because your poor gourd died. You just feel terrible about that. You had pity on the gourd. You didn't labor for the gourd. What did you do to make the gourd? You didn't plant it. You didn't make it grow, but you feel sorry for it. Here you are being sorry for the gourd, which you have not labored, neither made it to grow. It came up in a night and perished in a night. It was a special quick-growing gourd. Zoom, it was here. You didn't do anything to make it grow and now you are all depressed and feeling sorry for yourself. You are all miserable and sad because the gourd is gone. If you can feel bad because of the gourd, can I not pity Nineveh?'

Verse 11, "And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and also much livestock?" God said, 'You feel sorry for the gourd. You wish the gourd were still here.'

You miss the gourd. You didn't have anything to do with making the gourd. You didn't create it or have anything to do with making it come up. You feel bad because of the gourd. You miss the gourd. Well, what about Me? Here's 120,000 people down here in Nineveh, plus all the livestock. Don't you think I should have a little pity on them? After all, I made them. They are the work of My hands. I brought them into being. If you can have pity on the gourd, then I can have pity on the Assyrians.' Jonah had never really looked at it that way before.

There are various things we see in the book of Jonah. The book of Jonah shows God's great mercy. It shows that God will accept anyone's repentance, as long as it is genuine and heartfelt. God is merciful and God desires to be merciful. God desires to give us a chance to change. Certainly, there are other lessons we can derive from it. If God wants you to do something or if God wants you to go somewhere, you had better go. If God wants you to do it, you had better do it. If you try to "duck out" and hide to get out of it, God has ways of getting your attention. You will wind up really wanting to go and to do what God wants you to do. God has ways of dealing with us and ways of getting our attention.

One other thing about Jonah is that Jonah's three days and three nights in the fish's belly was symbolic of Jesus Christ being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Matthew 12:38-41, "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.' But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.'"

In His prophesy, Jesus Christ said that what Jonah went through was, in effect, a type of a death and a resurrection. If God hadn't intervened and if this fish hadn't spit him out, Jonah would have died. That would have been Jonah's grave. He would have been buried in the fish's belly. But God brought him forth after three days and three nights. God worked that miracle and actually used it as symbolic of the length of time the Messiah would be in the grave before He would be brought forth—in His case,

to a literal resurrection, a resurrection to power and glory.

There's a lot that can be learned from the little short book of Jonah and the things that are packed in there. There's an awful lot packed into the Minor Prophets. The book of Amos is more of what we think of as a prophetic book in the sense that the focus of it is prophecy. The focus of it is the end time. The book of Obadiah is a very short book that focuses on one aspect of end-time prophecy. The book of Jonah gives us a little insight into prophesies altogether.

Those who are doing God's work, those who are representing God, need to be filled with a desire and a yearning to carry God's message. There needs to be willingness and a desire to carry God's message, to proclaim God's message and to appreciate and to value God's mercy. They should never take those things for granted. There's a lot packed in there.

Next Bible study we are going to go through the books of Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah. Again, they are fairly short little books. There's some overlap that we will see. Micah is the primary one of these books and the lengthiest of the group. We will go into those next Bible study as we progress through this series on the Minor Prophets. We will have a chance to wrap up those books next time.