

ST. ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH
Sarasota, Florida

CONVERSATION ON THE MINOR PROPHETS

Session Plan #2 for Thursday, February 19, 2015

This week focusing on Eighth Century B.C. prophets:

AMOS, HOSEA, and MICAH

OPENING PRAYER

MUTUAL SHARING OF GOD'S PEACE

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF AMOS

A) The Prophet –

1. **AMOS** means “burden” or “burden-bearer” or even more precisely “**heavy burden-bearer.**”
 - a) ...he lived up to the meaning of his name by bearing up under his divinely given burden of declaring judgment on rebellious Israel
 - b) ...he bore the burden of Jehovah against several countries of his day
 - c) ...the word “burden” actually means ‘**denunciation**’
 - d) ...as a prophet his ministry was a denunciation against the sinfulness of those countries, he pronounced God’s judgments against them.
 - e) ...not a ‘professional’ prophet like the more numerous cultic prophets of his day
 - f) ...a **herdsman of sheep** and a **dresser of sycamore trees**; an ordinary man who was called by God to do great work for Him!
2. A citizen of **Tekoa**:
 - a) ...located south of Jerusalem and west of, and overlooking the Dead Sea; about 6 miles south of Bethlehem
 - b) ...a dry & desolate region about 2700 feet above sea level
 - c) ...sheep from this region still known for producing wool of superior quality; as a wool merchant Amos probably made numerous trips into the northern cities of Israel and witnessed first-hand the religious and social corruption of its people
 - d) ...sycamore trees – produced fig-like “woody” fruit; common in the diet of poorer people
 - e) ...but these trees were primarily located in the region of the coastal plain and also in Jordan Valley, which suggests that Amos had to migrate annually to those areas in order to do his work.
3. His **CALL**: (*thought to be the 5 visions recorded in his book*)
 - a) The Locusts (7:1-3)
 - b) The Great Fire devouring the Land (7:4-6)
 - c) The Plumb line (7:7-9)
 - d) The Basket of Summer fruit (8:1-2)
 - e) The Lord standing by the altar and commanding to destroy the capitals and letting none escape (9:1)

B) Time of Writing –

1. Events took place between 760-750 B.C.
 - a) Uzziah was King of Judah (he reigned from 767-740 BC)
 - b) Jereboam II was King of Israel (he reigned from 793-753 BC)
2. Two years before the “earthquake”
 - a) ..it must have been of considerable magnitude
 - b) ..mentioned 400 years later (Zechariah 14:5)
 - c) ..also reported by Jewish historian Josephus
3. Israel was enjoying prosperity during this time, but corruption was widespread; Israel’s sins included:
 - a) ..sold the righteous into slavery (2:6)
 - b) ..oppressed the poor (2:6-7; 5:7-11)
 - c) ..accepted bribes (5:12)
 - d) ..dishonest in trade (8:5-6)
 - e) ..very materialistic (4:1; 6:4)
 - f) ..false confidence in their own righteousness (4:4; 5:14; 9:10)
 - g) ..failure to hear past warnings from God (2:11-12; 4:7-12)
4. Two to three decades before the Assyrian Captivity and fall of Israel (722 BC)
 - a) ..during 9th century B.C., Assyria increased in power mostly in the ‘east’ then gradually extending that power ‘westward’
 - b) ..1/2 century before Amos was a time of relative calm & prosperity for both Israel & Judah; trade was extensive, commerce flourished, wealth was accumulated
 - c) ..however, an inner sickness was developing
5. Prophetic message seems to have been delivered @ Bethel

C) Main Teachings –

1. **Judgment** on the nations (1:1 – 2:16)
 - a) ..surrounding nations: Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Moab, Edom, Ammon
 - b) ..ultimately on ISRAEL – because of cruelty to her own people
2. **Punishment** coming to **Israel** (3:1 – 4:13)
 - a) ..only a remnant will be spared (3:12)
 - b) ..rest, especially the rich, will be plundered (3:13 – 4:13)
3. **Call to Repent** (5:4-15)
4. **Failure to Repent** will bring **Day of the Lord** (a day of exceptional darkness for them) (5:16-27)
5. **“Woe to you who are at ease in Zion”** (6:1-14)
6. **Five Visions** depicting coming judgment (*see A.3 above*)
7. **A Ray of Hope** (*really, an oracle of Hope, through raising up of the “fallen” tabernacle of David*)
 - a) ..a spiritual remnant will be saved (9:8-10)
 - b) ..Israel will be restored, not as a physical nation, but as a spiritual kingdom (9:11-15)
 - c) ..under the Messiah who will come from the House of David (9:11)
 - d) ..important to see N.T. references to Acts 15:15-18; Luke 1:67-79)

D) Lessons for contemporary application –

1. Problems of luxury and ease.
2. Problems of rejecting sound preaching
3. Problems of indifference
4. Problems of “meaningless” worship
5. Problems of apostasy

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF HOSEA

A) The Prophet –

1. **“HOSEA”** means *“salvation,” “deliverance,” “help;”* can be translated **“God is Salvation”**
2. **Northern Kingdom Prophet**
 - a) ..seems to have an intimate knowledge of northern tribes (5:1; 6:8-9; 12:12; 14:6)
 - b) ..makes reference to *“our land;” “our King”* (1:2; 7:5)
 - c) ..characteristically refers to Israel by the name of its largest tribe: **EPHRAIM** (4:17; 5:3, 5, etc.)
 - d) ..a younger contemporary of AMOS
 - e) Nothing known of his occupation
3. **Son of BEERI; husband of GOMER**
 - a) ..Gomer was a wife of harlotry (1:2) who bore 2 sons and 1 daughter (*their God-given names represented different aspects of God’s relationship to Israel*)
 - b) ..Gomer’s infidelity found her *‘in bed’* with many different lovers
 - c) ..Hosea was instructed to *“buy her back and love her again;”* which he did (3:2-3)
4. **Hosea’s tragedy enabled him to understand God’s immeasurable love for His people**
 - a) ..he had a special insight into God’s grief over Israel’s sins
 - b) ..thus, his words of coming judgment are passionate and evoke from a heart of tenderness

B) Time of Writing –

1. Between 750-722 B.C.
 - a) ..probably shortly after the prophecy of Amos and before the fall of Israel (722 B.C.)
 - b) ..worked for probably 50 years
 - c) ..his ministry is thought to have spanned the reigns of the last 6 kings of Israel
 - d) ..somewhat older than Isaiah and Micah
 - e) ..speculation that, as a boy, he may have known the prophet Jonah
2. Jeroboam (931-910 B.C.) had introduced calf-worship; Ahab and Jezebel (874-853 B.C.) had led the Israelites to Baal worship
3. Hosea’s summary of indictments against Israel are ‘spelled out’ in one word: **“HARLOTRY”**
4. This *“prostitution”* included:
 - a) Spiritual whoredom – Israel committed spiritual adultery for so long that she forgot who God really was and knew nothing about Him (4:6; 5:4; 8:12)
 - b) Moral whoredom – (they were in ruin and decay) (cf. 7:8; 9:9; 12:7-8; 4:14)
 - c) Political whoredom – nation was in turmoil and upheaval
5. Israel was a nation in overall decay!

C) Main Teaching –

1. Chapters 1-3 relate **Hosea’s personal experience** with Gomer to impress in his mind God’s feeling for His people who had committed spiritual adultery
2. Three children by Gomer each with symbolic names –
 - a) ..a son, **Jezreel**, implying that God would punish the dynasty of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel (2 Kings 10:1-31)
 - b) ..a daughter, **Lo-ruhamah**, literally means **“no mercy”** – a prophecy of the Assyrian captivity (1:6-7)

- c) ..another son, **Lo-Ammi**, “not my people” It indicated the temporary rejection of Israel (1:8-9). Israel would be restored and the children’s names would be changed. (cf. 1:11; 2:22-23; 2:1, 23)
3. Israel would be cast off for a time because of her whoredom, but after a time God would love her again and take her back to be His wife; a symbol of God’s mercy (3:4-5)
4. Chapters 4-11 – defy attempts to outline! One biblical scholar describes them as “*sentences that fall from Hosea like the sobs of a broken heart!*”

D) Lessons for contemporary application –

1. The downfall of a nation. Inner corruption, can be more dangerous to a people than the existence of powerful external enemies. (cf. Prov. 14:34; Romans 1:18)
2. Even those who consider themselves “God’s people” can be destroyed for a lack of knowledge.
3. God looks on the “inner” man.
4. Those “*who sow the wind will reap the whirlwind.*” (8:7)
5. Hosea is among the most highly regarded and quoted prophecies in the N.T. It deserves our attention!

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF MICAH

A) THE PROPHET –

1. His name means “**Who is like Jehovah?**”
2. From the city of Moresheth-Gath
 - a) ..located in Judah, about 20-25 miles southwest of Jerusalem (near border with Philistines)
 - b) ..good farming area with fertile soil
 - c) ..near the great costal road which ran N/S from Egypt to Mesopotamia; a road along which the great armies of antiquity regularly passed
 - d) ..like Amos, Micah was a man of the countryside who had lots of time for thought and the gaining of clear vision
 - e) ..nothing other known about his occupation
3. His character is best described in 3:8
 - a) ..possessed Amos’ passion for Justice; and, Hosea’s heart of love
 - b) ..his spirit burned with indignation over how city dwellers oppressed the peasants
 - c) ..scholars indicate that his style of writing is “*rough,*” like many a peasant writer of his times
 - d) ..had a quick temperament; quickly changes from one subject to another
 - e) ..sometimes bold, stern, severe; at other times uses sorrowful and even loving tones
4. Isaiah’s contemporary in many respects; similarity in their messages; some call the book of Micah, “*Isaiah in miniature;*” but, there are some significant differences:
 - a) ..Isaiah was a man of the city – one who was in close contact with world affairs; an associate of kings and princes; even thought to be leader of the “Jehovah Party” (*loyalists of his day*)
 - b) ..Micah – a simple country man who had no interest in political affairs, but did have deep compassion for the oppressed, and great concerns for the spiritual and moral problems of his people
5. Micah was the last of the prophets sent to announce the doom of Israel.
6. Micah condemned in Judah the same things that Amos and Hosea had in Israel

B) TIME OF WRITING –

1. Between 735-700 B.C.
2. So dated, by the reigns of Jotham (740-732 B.C.), Ahaz (732-716 B.C.) and Hezekiah (716-687 B.C.)
3. Although Micah deals primarily with Judah, he also addresses the northern kingdom of Israel and predicts its fall in 722 B.C.
4. Strong denunciations of idolatry and immorality suggest that his ministry preceded the religious reforms instituted by Hezekiah
5. Micah's spoken ministry is thought to have much larger than his written prophecies, which are the summation of his total ministry
6. Scholars believe he may have prophesied for 50 years; the book of Micah was probably composed near the end of that ministry
7. At the time of Micah, Judah was politically threatened by a coalition existing between Israel and Syria, against Assyria; these were "*trying times*" with the constant threat of invasion and foreign rule
8. Micah lived to see the arrival of the Assyrian army; the fall of Damascus in Syria; the war between Israel and Judah; the conquest of Galilee; the destruction of Samaria and the northern kingdom of Israel, and Sargon's defeat of Egypt. (*It was a violent, unsettled period of history!*)

C) MAIN TEACHINGS –

1. Micah is split into 3 collections of speeches, sermons, and prophecies; largely arranged by topic rather than when they were preached
 - a) ..first is to be heard by all people as a general cry against God's people (1:2ff)
 - b) ..second, specifically singles out the heads of Israel (3:1ff)
 - c) ..third is for all God's people (6:1ff)
2. Summary of Micah's message:
 - a) Judgment will come from God (1:3ff)
 - b) Samaria is to be overthrown (1:6-7)
 - c) Judah will fall to Babylon (3:12; 4:10)
 - Micah was 1st prophet to specifically threaten Judah with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple
 - The threat of Micah caused Hezekiah to repent (Jeremiah 26:18)
 - During Micah's time the kingdom of Israel continued to crumble inwardly and outwardly until its final collapse in 722 B.C.
 - Assyrian Empire reached height of its power and became a constant threat to Judah; Micah's prediction of a future Babylonian captivity for Judah (4:10)
 - d) Advance of Assyrian army through Micah's section of the country is described (1:10-16)

D) Lessons for contemporary application –

1. There are some great texts in Micah:
 - a) 5:2 – Micah focused people's attention on a humble birthplace (Bethlehem) for their king; not a palace in the capitol. That king would share the common man's burden and be his deliverer. Only the birth of Christ ("*whose goings forth are to be everlasting*") could possibly be meant here. (cf. Matt. 2:1-11)
 - b) 6:6-8 – Micah's simple, yet profound, statement summarizing the cardinal teachings of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah; God's requirements for humans set forth in clear, simple terms:
 - Amos was the prophet of Justice (Amos 5:24)
 - Hosea declared God's unfailing mercy (Hosea 11:8; 14:4-7)
 - Isaiah pleaded with Israel to walk in communion with God (Isaiah 1:16-20)