

Joel, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk; sin, repentance, and foundations for hope, restoration

I. Joel 'Yahweh is God', one of the earliest 'minor' prophets, 805-835 BC.

Setup: Judah is being devastated by drought, famine, and 4 waves of locusts. Destruction came in just a few hours, confirmed by other historical figures. Joel concludes that it can only be God's judgment (see Deut 28:38-46). Joel sees this as only a foretaste of the 'great and terrible day of the Lord '

However, during this time, worship had been restored in the land under King Joash and the priest Jehoida (found in 2 Kings/2 Chron, not Joel)..

But, just before the Day of the Lord prophecy, Joel prophesies that He will pour out His Spirit on all flesh (not just in Judah/Israel), and points to Pentecost 800 yrs later, confirmed by Peter (Acts 2:16). This is a prelude to the judgment of God, when nations and people will be called into account.

Prophetic Importance: With the 'all flesh' mention in 2:28, the Age of the Church is prophesied, and "whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"-2:32.

The most radical concept yet: GOD MEANS TO SAVE THE WHOLE WORLD!

Point of focus: Joel 2:28-32. In spite of judgment, God will pour Himself out on us and restoration for the believer will inevitably follow.

2. ISAIAH 'Yahweh is Salvation'. Prophetically the most significant Messianic O.T. book, written 700BC or slightly later, 50 years after he began to prophesy. This was about the time of the founding of Rome and the start of the Olympic Games in Greece.

Isaiah is referenced 21 times in the N.T., and numerous references to the Messiah are made in the book including his scourging in 52:14.

As well, he prophesied Judah's Babylonian captivity, the rise of Cyrus the Persian, who allowed the Jews to 'go home', ending the exile.

Skeptics say that the detailed events mentioned (like those above) after, were written later and attached by others, but most agree it was just really accurate prophecy on the part of Isaiah. I'm goin' with that one.

Tradition (not scripture) says that he was martyred after King Hezekiah's death when Manessah reigned. Those believers 'sawn in two' referenced in Hebrews 11:37 is thought to be a reference to Isaiah's death.

Significance of Isaiah After the plagues of Joel's time, there was huge prosperity in both kingdoms, but Israel had slipped into pagan religions, and Judah, though ruled by some good kings, were slipping, too.

One more revival for Judah was in the works for Judah under King Josiah (640-609 BC), it was obvious that Moses covenant had been trashed (Deut 30, Levit 26), and that judgment was inevitable.

The world is a 'mess in the making' with Assyria getting ready to take Samaria, and Asian powers were looking for conquest. Fortunately, Europeans are not ready to take on the world yet. Isaiah is paying attention.

Purpose of Isaiah There's a number of Hebrew words for sin, and Isaiah used nearly every one of them. While he attempted to get God's people to repent and avert disaster, he also laid a foundation of hope for 'the remnant', the survivors that remain faithful to God in the midst of tribulation, a recurring theme.

Messiah names from Isaiah: 9:6—Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.. also, Rod of Jesse, Cornerstone, King, Shepherd, Servant of Yahweh, Elect One, Lamb of God, Leader and Commander, Redeemer, Anointed one. He is a 'Prophetic Biographer' of Jesus.

Favorite Chapter—tough one—maybe Chapter 53, on the humanity/divinity of Christ. Also, ch. 52, 53 are loaded with prophecies fulfilled in the N.T.

3. Zephaniah, 'The Lord has hidden'. Zephaniah, prophet to Judah, and was a descendant of King Hezekiah (during Isaiah's time).

He grew up in Jerusalem and therefore was understandably emotional about prophesying its destruction.

Northern Kingdom (Israel) in Assyrian hands for 100 yrs, were taken captive.
Southern Kingdom (Judah) escaped, but only because they paid blood money.
Judah's alliance with Assyria brought with it idolatry, mostly astral religions.

Zephaniah is in disbelief that Judah is getting away with this knowing what has happened to Israel up north.

(Zephaniah continued)

Assyrian power wanes, and finally a good king is in Judah, Josiah.

The Book of Law is found in the temple and worship is restored, idols are destroyed, and Passover is celebrated once again.

Like the other prophets, 3 things emerge as he prophesies:

- 1) Sin is bad; bad fruit, plus you'll get judged every time.
- 2) Repentance is good, you'll be restored and rewarded (every time).
- 3) Promises are made to the 'remnant', survivors (yep, every time).

Recurring theme: 'Day of the Lord', the time when God will bring His full purposes into existence once and for all; judgment for unrighteousness, and blessing for those that persevere. In N.T., is called 'Day of Jesus Christ'.

Significance: short term local events (Babylonian captivity) and end-time implications. Saw same things coming as numerous other prophets.

Weird Thing: Talks a lot about joy believe it or not (ex, 3:17)

4. Jeremiah—the weeping prophet/intercessor—possibly 'Yahweh exalts'

Single and celibate, Jeremiah was demonstrating his fears for the next generation by not having kids.

We know more about him than most prophets as he 'vented' his thoughts and frustrations on how we frustrate God's purposes. Not shy about his opinions.

Prophesied 626-583 BC, as a youth, the doom of Jerusalem, after the evil King Manasseh. His son, Josiah, a good King, had a righteous reign which delayed judgment, but his successors were evil, and so it resumed.

Like other prophets, He reminded the Jews that God's covenant was still in effect and to honor it meant life, to disregard it meant destruction (Deut 28).

And, like others, he prophesied to and about other nations, reminding that they, too, had God's attention, and would answer to Him as well.

Unlike most other prophets, his compassionate heart for God's people kept him so heartbroken that he could hardly detach himself from their plight.

This is the heart of the intercessor, one that never quite gives up.

At one point he even prays for the people after God told him to stop, possibly because he was so emotionally involved that he couldn't pray objectively.

Jesus quoted Jeremiah several times in the Gospels, such as Jesus' reference to the temple becoming a 'den of thieves...'

Difficulties: His prophecies do not refer to chronological events—they fast forward and rewind throughout the book—gotta really pay attention. Again, read the commentary notes to stay on top of it.

Favorite chapter: 29:1-10; Prosper in a hostile world, be engaged, but don't forget who you are, because (11-14): for I know the thoughts I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not evil to give you an expected end.

5. Habakkuk (Embrace) written circa 600 BC

Theme: From doubt to faith-filled worship, from 1:1-4 to 3:17-19

Habakkuk, likely a Levite qualified to lead worship in the temple has concluded that God has withdrawn from His people.

King Josiah is dead, and evil kings oppress the people, there is no faith to be found.

Babylonia is rising, the world is falling apart and Habakkuk is struggling with reconciling his worship-leading vocabulary with what he sees going on around.

Notation after 3:19 'to chief musician' implies this verse was to be used for worship, and that Habakkuk was directing that.

Habakkuk needs a revelation of faith because he has none left.

By the end of chapter 3, he has had his sights raised to see that God is paying attention and 'this, too, will pass'....

Paul was impressed with Habakkuk, when, in Galatians 3:11-14, Paul quotes him when he declares from 2:4 that 'the just shall live by faith', not by what he sees going on around him.

Sometimes we need to rest in God's character, and go with what we know about Him and focus through what we see going on around us.

The point: 3:19—you were made for higher ground. Keep rising above 'it'.

Jesus Predicted: 3:13

You went forth for salvation for your people, For Salvation with your Anointed.
Jesus (Yeshua, 'Savior, Salvation'), Christ ('Anointed one'...)