

**Repentance, Justice, & Restoration**

**(Hosea, Joel, & Amos)**

*Gathering Together Around God’s Word*

*Sunday, July 24th 2022*

*10:05am in EM 307/308 & Zoom*

**Hosea**

Hosea is the first of the minor prophets, the twelve prophetic books which conclude the Old Testament. These 12 books are known as the minor prophets not because of the lesser importance of their message, but rather because of the shorter length of their texts compared to other prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah. The prophecy of Hosea centers around God’s unfathomable love for Israel in spite of their disobedience and idolatry.

Hosea was a prophet from the Northern kingdom of Israel (also known as Ephraim). Hosea began his prophetic work during the prosperous and relatively calm reign of Jeroboam II (786-746 BCE) and continued to be active through the Syro-Ephramite War (734-732 BCE) and the reign of King Hoshea. This later period was a time of calamity, political anarchy, and war that ultimately led to the fall of the Northern Kingdom by Assyria in 722 BCE.

While the Book of Hosea fluctuates between prophecies of judgment and doom and prophecies of hope and restoration, it is perhaps best known for demonstrating God’s unending love toward Israel. As Abraham Heschel said, *“Amos dwells on what God has done…Hosea dwells on what God has felt for Israel.”* Hosea’s prophecies are based upon the larger covenantal tradition and speak to the mutual relationship between God and Israel and the grace & obligation the relationship entails. More than anywhere else in Scripture, Hosea encapsulates the agony God feels over Israel’s betrayal and the tenderness with which God loves Israel.

**Joel**

Joel, unlike Hosea or Amos, contains little if any markers with which to locate the prophet historically. The opening verse only reveals that “the word of the Lord…came to Joel son of Pethuel” (1:1). Most scholars believe the book was written in 5th or 4th century BCE based largely on allusions Joel makes to earlier Biblical literature (e.g. Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, II Chronicles).

Joel’s intertwining of natural & human events and his focus on the “day of the Lord” has led some to describe the book as “proto-apocalyptic.” The book largely centers around a locust plague which leads to a call for national repentance and prayer. As the book progresses this plague transforms into an army which might be an allusion to the Babylonians army that invaded Judah starting in 598 BCE. God responds to the locust plague by restoring the abundance of the land (2:18-27) and promising a future age of the Spirit (2:28-32). The book concludes with God bring judgment against the nations through a great battle in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (“YHWH judges/had judged”) and blessing God’s people and Judah (3:17-21).

A prominent theme of Joel is the call upon God’s people to repentance. Though the book is filled with threatening language and images of judgment, Joel is ultimately focused on God’s deliverance of Jerusalem. The book portrays God as one who responds to Judah’s pleas for help in a merciful, loving way. Ultimately, “the day of the Lord” is about the salvation of God’s people.

**Amos**

Amos was an 8th century prophet from Tekoa, a small town in the Judean hills south of Bethlehem. Amos is among the earliest of prophets and the oldest of the prophets whose words have been collected. He was a shepherd and farmer of sycamore trees (figs). Amos speaks of his call to being a prophet in 7:10-17, indicating he was a layman and not a professional prophet. Though from Judah, Amos was active in the Northern Kingdom and believed to have preached for no more than a year, with some scholars suggesting it was only a few weeks.

Amos was the first of the prophets to declare that Israel would be completed annihilated. He was also the first to declare that Israel had broken the covenant with God. There were other prophets who declared God’s judgment against Israel but never on the scale of Amos. Amos prophesied in a time or relative peace and prosperity, though this prosperity led to a number of issues including a dramatic disparity in the lifestyles of the rich and poor. The message of righteousness Amos preached is deeply interwoven into themes of social justice.

The book of Amos is believed to be a collection of the prophet’s preaching, collected and edited by followers of his sometime after Amos delivered his message. The materials are not believed to be in the order Amos originally preached them. The book is largely poetic with one section of prose (7:10-15) & an account of Amos’ visions that mixes poetry and prose (7:1-9; 8:1-3). There are several forms of speech throughout the book, most prominent is an indictment of Israel for its sins followed by announcement of God’s judgment. Other patterns are exhortations, hymns, funeral lament, vision accounts, and promises.

Amos’ message is direct and uncompromising: Israel’s election entails moral responsibility & living in accord with God’s will, which Israel has failed to do. Therefore, God’s judgment has declared an end to Israel. Amos understood Israel’s covenant in terms of mutual responsibility, specifically important were justice and righteousness. Amos called out the hypocrisy of Israel’s worship, charging that Israel loved their sanctuaries and rituals more than God. Another theme central to Amos is the sovereignty of God and the unique perspective that Israel is not the only nation that God has chosen. Amos is almost entirely devoid of divine mercy or grace, until the end where he talks of promises of future restoration and blessing (9:11-15).

**Repentance**

* Hosea 5:1-7, 14-15
* Hosea 6:1-6
* Hosea 14:1-3
* Joel 1:1-2, 13-20
* Joel 2: 12-17

**Justice**

* Hosea 4:1-11
* Hosea 12:2-9
* Amos 2:6-16
* Amos 5:18-27
* Amos 8:1-12
* Amos 9:5-10

**Restoration**

* Hosea 11:1-12
* Hosea 14:4-9
* Joel 2:26-32
* Joel 3:17-21
* Amos 9:11-15