

Read the Bible in a Year

Week 50 – May 15-21

Read on Your Own this Week:

Psalm 144-146

John 9-12

Readings in Class:

Amos 5-9

Obadiah 1

Jonah 1-4

Micah 1-7

Nahum 1-3

Habakkuk 1-3

Zephaniah 1-3

Haggai 1-2

Introduction to the Book of the 12

The Book of The Twelve is a collection of 12 Prophets that fit together on a single scroll. Hosea through Malachi, in our ordering of the Bible, form the very conclusion to the Scriptures. Though they are twelve different prophetic works, they have themes and ideas that connect to one another. The twelve prophets interpret and play off of each other though many of the authors never met each other.

These smaller prophetic works flesh out further what Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel hit on in big detail. Also written in these books are some of the most famous and well loved sections in the Bible, Jonah being one of them. The twelve prophets tell of story of how God will work through his corrupt people, and even in the state of crushing violence and exile, how God will bring his people back to himself and point us to Jesus.

Below are brief summaries and key characteristics of each book of the twelve.

A brief summary of Hosea (740-715 BC) Written to Israel

The first of the twelve, Hosea tells of a story of how God made Hosea marry a prostitute and how this woman cheated on him. Hosea is called to divorce her for her promiscuity but is then later called to have this woman be called back home and made his wife again. Hosea's life becomes an example of how God will treat his people. He will send them into exile for going after other gods, but he will call them back to himself. It is from the Prophet Hosea that we get the fulfillment of Jesus being called out of Egypt (11:1).

A brief summary of Joel (848-800 BC) Written to Israel & Judah

The big theme in the Prophet Joel is the introduction of the theme, “The Day of the Lord.” The Day that God comes and brings judgment and salvation. Joel focuses this theme on an event in his day of a locust swarm that came through and ate everything. Likewise, God will soon send a devastation that will destroy everything. The people are called to come back to God and therefore be spared that wrath that will come and find shelter in the Lord. Joel 2 is always read on Ash Wednesday, which calls all people to repent.

A brief summary of Amos (792-740 BC) Written to Israel

God is described as a roaring Lion in the book of Amos. He comes roaring after his enemies, which Amos spends the first few chapters naming. All the nations get called out and just as Israel is clapping their hands and saying, “you tell them God” we discover that God was just tightening the noose around Israel as they get saved for last as we are shocked that the Day of the Lord is coming also on God’s people. Amos is all law, except for the last 5 verses, Amos 9:11-15, where God promises restoration to David’s tent, which is used in the book of Acts to describe the work of the Church.

A brief summary of Obadiah (587-553 BC) Written to Judah concerning Edom

When Judah was taken into exile and the city of Jerusalem destroyed, refugees fled to the neighboring country of Edom, which are descendants of Esau. When the children of Israel arrived at their brother’s doorstep in their hour of need, the Edomites further plundered them and hurt them. Obadiah writes his brief 21 verses condemning Edom for treating Judah this way and stating that the same day of the Lord will happen to them, and their refugees will not find shelter either. Curious enough, in Hebrew, the word “edom” sounds like “adam.” Some prophets will use Edom as a stand-in for all humanity. Obadiah could be doing this too.

A brief summary of Jonah (790-770 BC) Written to Israel concerning Nineveh

The most well known of the Twelve, Jonah is also unique among the twelve. He is the only prophet sent to outsiders while the other 12 are written to the Israelites. Jonah spends the book running from God, getting swallowed by a great fish, and even trying to sabotage his own message. Despite his best efforts, the people of Nineveh repent, which gets Jonah outraged. God ends his book by trying to convert Jonah and save him, which ends without a resolution. Instead, we are called to answer the question of the book, “what should we make of God making peace with our enemies?” Jonah is written to the people of God to show that if God will forgive outsiders when they turn to them, how much more will he forgive his own people if they should turn to him?

A brief summary of Micah (750-686 BC) Written to Judah

Micah is a small prophet living in a small town near Jerusalem. He writes and lives during the same time as Isaiah the prophet. In fact, Isaiah chapter 2:2-5 and Micah 4:1-5 are almost word for word the same which details God’s mountain being elevated higher than all the other places of worship and all nations streaming to Israel. This similarity begs the question of whose was

written first or if Micah knew Isaiah. Micah is also the book, in chapter 5, which details that the Christ will come from Bethlehem, another small town.

A brief summary of Nahum (663-612 BC) written to Judah concerning Nineveh

Just over 100 years after Jonah preached and converted the Ninevites, they once again fell into their old ways and lives. Nahum is completely devoted to detailing the destruction of the Assyrian Empire at the hands of the Babylonians in 612 BC. We see in this book that the time of favor that the Ninevites had in Jonah's day had come to an end. Likewise with the book of Jonah, Nahum is the only other book in the Bible that ends with a question. Instead of rejoicing at the conversion of the Ninevites in Jonah's day, Nahum asks us who will not rejoice at seeing the unrepentant city be destroyed that killed and hurt so many people.

A brief summary of Habakkuk (605 BC) written to Judah

Another unique book among the prophets, Habakkuk is a conversation between God and Habakkuk as the prophet wrangles with how God is working. He first asks why God allows evil to endure among the people of Israel. God responds by saying he will destroy the people and purge the evil from among them. When Habakkuk freaks out on God destroying his people and using wicked people to do it, God details that he will also take care of the Babylonians as well and restore his people as he sees fit. Habakkuk then turns his prayer of one of faith and trust in God and says that even if God should provide us with nothing, that we will yet put our faith in him. Habakkuk is the book which comes the verse loved by Paul in Romans, "The just will live by faith." 2:4

A brief summary of Zephaniah (640-609 BC) written to Judah

Written on the Eve of exile, Zephaniah focuses on how the Day of the Lord will now come upon the people of Judah and carry them away into exile. Zephaniah is the last cry in the ordering of the twelve that cries out for repentance from the people but also notes that the damage has already been done. The destruction of Judah is then used as a template for how all the other nations will likewise be undone. After the judgment, God notes that he will restore and make new. And not just the people of Israel, but all the nations will be given a "pure speech"

A brief summary of Haggai (520 BC) written to Post-Exilic Community

Following the return from exile, the Judeans (shortened to Jews), are a small and berated community that is surrounded by threatening neighbors. Haggai and also Zechariah are two prophets who work together to encourage the people to rebuild the temple, which is completed in 516 BC. Noting here the style of the Post-Exilic Prophets, they are now written in prose and not in poetry. Of importance here is that Zerubbabel, the Son of David, who led the exiles home, will be used as God's signet ring, or stamp of approval. Once again noting that through the Sons of David, a Messiah will still yet come.

A brief summary of Zechariah (520-518 BC) written to Post-Exilic Community

Of the post-exilic prophets, Zechariah is perhaps the most dense. Much of his imagery and ideas will also be used in the New Testament book of Revelation. Chapters 1-8 and 9-14 form a major division in the book, with 9-14 getting into major imagery and intense Messianic pointing. Chief among these are the verses in 9:9-10 that the Messiah will come riding in on a donkey, which is used for Jesus on Palm Sunday, and also 12:10 which details those gazing upon the one whom they have pierced, which is also used by John to note Jesus being pierced upon the cross.

A brief summary of Malachi (430 BC) written to Post-Exilic Community

The final messenger of the prophets and the lonely voice who is writing most likely 100 years following Haggai and Zechariah, Malachi gives a nice summary of the Old Testament. Using a question and response approach, we are reminded that God chose Jacob over Esau, and that he made his covenant with the people. But yet, in Malachi's day, the people are cheating the covenant. But Malachi notes that God is marking those who belong to him and while the people wait for the coming salvation of God they are given to remember Moses and the covenant that God made with his people before the great day of the Lord comes. The Old Testament leaves us here, as we are left waiting for the coming of the one who will prepare the way of the Lord.