

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. Today's topic is A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM THE MINOR PROPHETS.

(S) **The book of Hosea relates Hosea's bitter experience which dramatically portrays the Lord's relationship to Israel.** The prophet Hosea had married a certain woman called Gomer. But his wife was unfaithful to him and she became "a wife of prostitution". She went after other lovers and conceived "children of prostitution". The first child was a boy and was named "Jezreel". Just as God destroyed the royal house of the wicked king Ahab at Jezreel (2 Ki 9-10), likewise he would again avenge the wickedness and unfaithfulness of the present kings of Israel. The second child was a girl and was named "Lo-Ruhamah", which means "not loved". Because of Israel's unfaithfulness to God, God would no longer show love to Israel. The third child was a boy and was named "Lo-Ammi", which means "not my people". Because of Israel's unfaithfulness to God, God would no longer be Israel's God and Israel would no longer be his people. If the woman, who was called an adulteress in chapter 3:1 was Gomer, then instead of rejecting her totally, Hosea bought her back for himself and restored her former position of honour. Although chapters 1 and 3 are presented as actual history, they nevertheless have *symbolic* significance.

First. Just as Hosea had married Gomer, so the Lord had become Israel's "Husband".

Second. Just as Gomer had become unfaithful to Hosea, so Israel had become unfaithful to the Lord.

Third. Just as Gomer was enslaved by her lovers, so Israel would be enslaved by the very nations in which she had put her trust.

Fourth. Just as Hosea restored Gomer as his honourable wife, so the Lord would restore Israel's remnant as his true people.

Fifth. Just as Hosea redeemed her with the price of silver and barley, so Jesus Christ would redeem the true Israel with the price of his own precious blood.

(T) **The book of Joel prophesies the Day of the Lord, which begins with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and ends with the final judgement.** Joel motivates Israel to repent by prophesying the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord will begin with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. According to Acts 2:1-33, this was literally fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. From then onwards, the gospel of salvation was preached and is still preached. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord, will certainly be saved (2:32; Rom 10:12-13). Joel motivates Israel to repent by prophesying the final judgement. Only in Jerusalem and only for those who call on the name of the Lord there will be salvation, because all the nations will be destroyed in God's final judgement. Old Testament prophecy saw all future events as one whole picture without distinguishing the periods of time that separate one event from another. They saw all the end-time events together as one great event on "the Day of the Lord". Therefore, they also saw the closest future events, like the restoration of Israel as immediately connected to the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord teaches *the biblical view of history*: For the Lord "a thousand years is like one day". Therefore what happens in many centuries in our history is like one day in the eyes of the Lord. The Day of the Lord began with the first coming of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the Day of the Lord will end with the second coming of Jesus Christ and the final judgement, as Joel clearly shows. Thus, in a sense we are now living in "*the last days*" (2 Pet 3:3)! Also the many centuries of human history must be viewed from the point of view of God's judgements and salvation. Or as Joel said, the locust plague is a present judgement of God and warns that the final judgement of God is at hand!

(S) **The book of Amos prophesies against social injustices.** Amos preached in the Old Testament what James preached in the New Testament. They preached that faith in God without social justice is an empty faith. The faith of God's people must be proved by doing what is right, doing good and hating evil. It must be proved by maintaining justice in the courts. He preached against the ordinary people, against their oppression of the poor and needy (2:6), against sexual immorality and prostitution (2:7) and against the misuse of alcohol (2:8). He preached against the women, who were heartless and crushed the poor and needy (4:1). He preached against the powerful leaders of the country, who filled their houses and palaces with what they plundered from the poor people and looted in their wars (3:10; 5:11). And he preached against the judges in the country, who hated people who told the truth in court (5:10), who deprived the righteous of justice by taking bribes from the wicked, and who deprived the poor of justice because they could not pay bribes (5:12). He openly accused the judges of the country that they had turned justice into poison (6:12).

(T) **The book of Obadiah prophesies about God who will humble the pride and arrogance of people.** The main message of Obadiah is that people should not look down on other people in the day of their misfortune, nor rejoice

over their calamity in the day of their disaster. People should never plunder the possessions of others and never hand over fugitives into the hands of their oppressors.

(S) The book of Jonah prophesies about God's plan for people which cannot fail. God's "first plan" for Jonah was to go and proclaim a message to Nineveh. Jonah disobeyed and failed to accomplish this plan. But according to Jonah 3:1, God had a "second plan" for Jonah, namely, to nevertheless go and proclaim his message to Nineveh. Jonah obeyed and God's plan was accomplished. God does not just have one plan for our lives. If we fail to accomplish his "first plan" for our lives, he has a "second plan" ready, which is as good as his first plan! When we repent of our disobedience to his first plan, then God will have compassion, forgive us and give us another chance to serve him in a second plan. To put this in another way, the Sovereign God has the means to bring a person to the accomplishment of his plans! Because God is the Sovereign God in the universe, no one and nothing can cause him to fail to accomplish his plans on earth. In Isaiah 14:24,27 God says, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand. For the Lord Almighty has purposed and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?"

(T) The book of Micah prophesies that the Messiah is the ruler who shepherds his sheep. In chapter 4 and 5, God promises that he will gather and redeem the remnant of his people from Babylon (4:6,10). Then out of Bethlehem, God will give them a *ruler* "whose origins are from of old, from ancient times".

First. This ruler existed before the creation. He existed forever (Ps 90:2).

Second. This ruler will be born of a woman and his birth will be the beginning of the great Messianic Age.

Third. This ruler will unite the survivors of Judah (as "brothers of the Messiah", because the Messiah comes from the tribe of Judah) with the survivors of the ten tribes of Israel (Jer 3:18; Hos 1:11). This is an Old Testament picture with a New Testament reality. Like the other Old Testament prophets, Micah pictured the Messianic Age only in terms of the nation of Israel and its forms. But in the light of the New Testament revelation, this prophecy says that God's people from the Gentile nations will be gathered and united to God's people from Israel. Together they will enjoy salvation, fellowship with God and all the other blessings in Christ (5:3; Jn 10:16).

Fourth. This ruler is pictured, not as sitting on a throne, but as *standing* among his people, lovingly involved in their every day life (5:4; Rev 12:1).

Fifth. This ruler will protect his people (5:4). When the Lord is called "this ruler's *God*", then the Messiah is here pictured in his human nature as the Mediator between man and God.

Sixth. The greatness of this ruler will reach the ends of the earth (5:4). In Luke 1:32-33 the angel Gabriel says concerning Jesus Christ, "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (Isa 9:6-7; 11:10).

Seventh. And finally, this ruler will be the *peace* of his people (5:5; Eph 2:14). The word "peace" summarises everything connected to salvation, because it speaks of peace between God and man, of peace between man and other men and of peace between the people of different nations.

(S) The book of Nahum prophesies God's vengeance that is revealed in the overthrow of Nineveh.

First. The prophet Nahum's glorious task was to predict the overthrow of the capital of the mighty Assyrian Empire. God had given a sovereign command concerning Nineveh and she would be destroyed and her citizens would be carried into exile (1:14; 2:7). Whoever had the Almighty God against him, was doomed! And in chapter 2:13, God says, "I am against you (3:5)."

Second. Nahum's prophecy is at the same time a message against every other "Nineveh", against every other mighty city that seeks to seduce God's people or seeks to destroy them. The description of the city of Nineveh is taken over by the apostle John in Revelation chapter 17 to describe "Babylon, the great harlot" and to prophesy its overthrow. The cities of Nineveh, Babylon and Rome became *symbols* of every other godless city in the world, which try to seduce Christians or destroy Christians. Therefore Nahum's prophecy is a warning to politicians about God's terrible vengeance against every godless city.

(T) The book of Habakkuk prophesies that the real righteous people live by faith. The prophet complains that the rich and powerful in Judah were still exploiting and oppressing the poor and were apparently getting away with it. It seemed as if the Lord was tolerating the exploitation and oppression of needy people. It seemed as if the Lord was

doing nothing about injustice (1:2-4)! In contrast to the other prophetic books, the prophet first addresses the Lord. He complains to the Lord, asks questions, advances objections and waits for the Lord to answer.

First. Habakkuk asks a question, “Why does the Lord allow the wicked in Judah to oppress the righteous?” (1:2-4). The Lord answers, “The Chaldeans (Babylonians), would come as a punishment for the wicked in Judea.” (1:5-11).

Second. Habakkuk advances an objection, “Why does the Lord allow the people of Judah to be punished by the Chaldeans, when the Chaldeans were more wicked than the Judeans?” (1:12-17). Then the prophet stations himself on his watchtower and waits for the Lord’s answer (2:1). And the Lord answers, “The Chaldeans would also be punished. As a matter of fact, all the wicked would be punished. (2:4-20)! But *the righteous will live by his faith* (2:4).” It is the responsibility and glory of the real righteous people *to trust God*, even when he is not able to figure out the justice of God’s actions in history. In this humble trust and quiet confidence the righteous will live (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11).

Third. The Lord did more than answer Habakkuk’s questions and objections. He not only told him to exercise faith, but strengthened his faith by means of a vision. In this vision, the Lord came in glory to destroy the Chaldeans and to deliver his own people (3:1-15). The appearance of the Lord had a great effect on the prophet. He trembled in every part of his body (3:16). As a consequence, he no longer questioned the ways of the Lord’s providence, but waited patiently for God to act.

Fourth. Habakkuk expresses his gratitude for God’s unmerited grace in a psalm of trust and rejoicing (3:17-19).

(S) The book of Zephaniah prophesies about the great future renewal.

Chapter 3:8 exhorts all people to expect the final judgement day, on which God himself will be the Accuser, the Judge and the Executor of judgement!

Chapter 3:9 prophesies that God will renew people from all nations on earth and they will serve God not as separate nations, but united shoulder to shoulder.

Chapter 3:11-13 describes the new Jerusalem in which only people who trust in the Lord will live. As the Lord’s sheep, they will be shepherded without anyone making them afraid (Heb 12:5-6).

Chapter 3:14-17 describes the nature of salvation of the new Israel: All their sins will be atoned, their punishment removed and their enemies destroyed. God himself will live among them (Rev 21), at times quietly enjoying his love for his people and at times loudly rejoicing over them with singing.

Chapter 3:18-20 describes especially the return from exile and the restoration of Israel in their land.

In summary, on the day of God’s wrath and thereafter, God will hide and exalt the remnant of his own people (2:3).

(T) The book of Haggai prophesies the future shaking of the heavens and the earth.

First. The Lord patiently delays the final judgement day. Haggai 2:6 says, “In a little while, once more” God will shake the heavens and the earth. The prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament spoke of the divine patience and delay of the final judgement day. Habakkuk 2:3 says, “The revelation *awaits an appointed time*; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and not wait.” And 2 Peter 3:8-9 says, “Do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with *you*, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

Second. The final judgement day will shatter the power of all the kingdoms of this world. Hebrews 12:26-28 says that the final great shaking of the heavens and the earth will take place at the second coming of Christ! The words “once more” indicate the removal of what can be shaken, namely the created things, so that what cannot be shaken may remain. All Christians will receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken! Haggai 2:21-22 prophesies that in that shaking of the heavens and the earth, God will overturn all other thrones of kings on earth and he will shatter the power of all the kingdoms in the world (Ezek 38-39; Zech 1:21). Daniel 2:44 says, “The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people”. It will be left only to God’s people. “It will crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, but will itself endure forever.” The shaking of the heavens and the earth will introduce the new period of the world, namely, the new heavens and the new earth.

(S) The book of Zechariah prophesies about the future of Zion, and the rejection and subsequent glory of its Shepherd-King.

Chapter 9-10 contains prophecies about the ongoing return of people who were still living in exile and about the coming Messiah.

Chapter 11 contains prophecies concerning Israel's judgement in the light of world judgement. The Lord himself is the Shepherd of Israel. But Israel's fails to appreciate the Lord's shepherding function and rejects the coming Messiah. God lays down his shepherding function of Israel (11:1-9). In the future, God will also lay down his shepherding function of the whole world. He will break his staffs called 'Favour' and 'Union', which represent his general goodwill to people and his keeping people together in harmony. The end of the world will arrive (11:10-14).

Chapter 12-13 contains prophecies concerning Israel's salvation, which would only be possible through faith in the coming messiah who will be pierced on the cross.

Chapter 14 contains prophecies concerning the survivors of the Gentile nations who would share in the salvation of the remnant of Israel, the last great oppression, the final judgement day on which God's people would escape, but God's enemies would be struck with the plague, and some aspects of the renewal of the earth.

(T) The book of Malachi prophesies about the Day of the Lord.

First. The Day of the Lord begins at the first coming. The religious people in Israel saw that wicked people prospered and were apparently tolerated by God (3:14-15). They questioned God's rule on earth, "Where is the God of justice?" (2:17). Therefore the prophet announces that the Day of the Lord would come unexpectedly (3:1). It would begin with the coming of "the Angel of the covenant". He is the second person of the Triune God in his function as Mediator of the Old Covenant. He is the manifestation of Jesus Christ during the Old Testament period. At his first coming, Christ will be like a refiner's fire and like a launderer's soap and separate the wicked from the righteous (3:2-3,18). As a response to the prophet Malachi's prophecy, the Israelites drew up 'a scroll of remembrance' that contained the names of the righteous, the people who feared the Lord and honoured his name (3:16). Thus already the Old Testament made a distinction between *the natural nation of Israel* and *the true spiritual Israel* (Rom 9:6).

Second. The Day of the Lord ends at the second coming and final judgement. All evil people will be like stubble, Christ's coming will set them on fire and they will be completely destroyed. But the righteousness or salvation of believers will rise like the sun, driving away all wickedness, bringing healing of every wound and sickness and rescuing from every suffering (4:1-2). The wicked will be trampled underfoot, but the righteous will rejoice.

Third. Old Testament shadows become clear in New Testament realities. While chapter 3:4 describes these righteous people as people belonging to Jerusalem and Judah, chapter 1:11 describe them as people coming from all the nations in the world! This shows that *what the Old Testament says about the righteous in Israel must be applied to the righteous of all the nations in the New Testament! Old Testament prophecy finds its fulfilment in the New Testament and therefore must always be interpreted in the light of the New Testament!* But Old Testament prophecies are still veiled and cannot make a clear distinction between the first and second coming of Christ. In the light of the New Testament, at the first coming of Christ, faith in Jesus Christ would separate the righteous from the wicked. And at the second coming of Christ, everyone will finally see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve the God of the Bible and those who do not (3:18).

(S) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. This ends the sharing from the Old Testament books. During the next two weeks we will introduce the book of Revelation. Therefore, read through the book of Revelation once.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's kingdom" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".