

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature,

Lecture 30, Prophets of the North

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I haven't tried this for a while. Boker Tov? Great. Are you guys tired? We have two and a half weeks to go. Can we do it? No?

Come on, Katie. How about an Obama line? Yes, we can. Well, just to add a little more stress, there is an exam on Friday.

And I think if you've been sitting here for the last five minutes, you've got a good handle on this list of stuff up here in terms of what's going to be involved in the exam. The reason I've posted this is because the practice exam that is posted on Blackboard does not include these last things on the profits. All right? So, if you're using the practice exam, don't let that shape the limits of your study.

You're going to want to study the material that is included with regard to the specifically named profits. Hosea, right on through Joel there. Okay? If I get around to it, I'll try and post last fall's practice exam too.

That might help a little bit. So, do you have any questions about what the exam is covering? Everything from Solomon right on through, Lord willing, Wednesday's lecture will deal with Isaiah, Micah, and Joel. Yeah, Nick? No, I'm going to let you expand on that a little bit.

Okay? No, basically, take the kinds of things that I was talking about last time in terms of our introduction to prophecy and the importance of history, Torah, and the profits, and then this whole concept that God uses these people to bring the covenant to bear on their given historical circumstances. That's what I'm going to ask you to do with that. Now, that's not the end of the answer, but do some work in that area as well.

Yeah, good. Thanks. Any other questions? I promise not to be so rude as I was to Nick.

One more announcement. For those of you who are interested in this, we have a wonderful Jewish community on the North Shore, and there are a fair number of survivors of the Holocaust who are still alive. Every year, the number of them dwindles because, of course, they are getting older.

When I first came to this area 15 years ago, the number of survivors was probably about four times as much as it is now. But at any rate, they do honor the survivors of the North Shore. And if you have Tuesday evening free, I know many of you don't.

And as a matter of fact, this year, I don't either. But I would encourage you to go because it's a good time of, I don't mean a good time, but it's an important time of our honoring those who survived the Holocaust. The Gordon College Women's Choir is also going to be singing at that time, for those of you who are members of the Women's Choir.

Well, speaking of singing, we didn't sing last time. Let's sing today. Go to the memorial service on Tuesday night.

You'll sing this, and so you'll be all ready to do that. They sing it every year, so if they don't, I'll be really surprised. At any rate, let's take some time to pray together as we start.

Gracious God, our Heavenly Father, as we begin this week together, we're grateful that you have given us life, that you have given us health, that you restored our spirits, and that you renewed our life in Christ. Father, I know that unless you are here and present this morning, and unless you empower my words and each of our minds, what we do means nothing. And so, we would plead for your presence.

I would ask that you would help us to learn well, to learn in ways that will change and transform our lives by the power of your word and your spirit. Father, we do pray for those around us who are struggling with health issues, with burdens that are very heavy and difficult to bear. Please be tender and gentle with them.

Father, we pray for our leaders. We ask for a huge dose of wisdom for all of them, how we need you to walk through a world that's difficult. We pray for trouble spots in the world.

We do pray for the peace of Jerusalem as you exhort us to do in the Psalms. Father, we ask for special wisdom in dealing with very challenging issues in the Middle East. And we do pray for safety for those who are there with the armed services.

Protect them, Lord. All these things we would ask, mindful that you are indeed our master, and not only our master but master of the universe. So, we do pray in Christ's name with thanksgiving. Amen.

Well, we're going to do prophets to the north today, and we're doing a lot of them. We're doing four of them.

And in a moment, I'm going to do a little bit of review. Let me suggest to you, however, that as we get started on individual prophets, last time, we talked in an overarching and general way in terms of how to think about the prophetic literature,

the writing prophets particularly. Let me suggest that as we move into the material on each individual prophet, you make a point of getting to know the main issues.

You know, don't get lost in all the verbiage. Get to know the main issues that are part of that prophet's message. To help you along those lines, on Blackboard I do have that rather extensive list of which prophet did this, which prophet did that.

Those are trying to get to the main things that you should know about the prophets. So use that stuff to review, not only for the seven prophets that are on this exam but also as we're thinking towards the final exam as well. I think that might help you begin to sort these things out a little bit.

At any rate, by way of review just a little bit, well, I already answered that question in response to Nick, didn't I? Why were the prophets called covenant enforcement mediators? Because God has called them to speak to given historical circumstances when the people are being disobedient to the covenant. And so these are, if you want to put it this way, the policemen of the day, policing covenant enforcement. All right.

Maybe that's a little crass. Yeah, Trevor. Probably not in those exact same words, but well, you know, generally speaking; God has called these people because the folks of their particular historical circumstances are being disobedient to the covenant.

And God is calling them to address that and to warn the people of that particular time. Now, each prophet is going to do it in a different way. And we're going to see a couple of those today as well.

And by the way, of course, your exam question on covenant enforcement mediators is going to have you do more than simply regurgitate that definition that I just gave you. So, think about how this is going to apply to each particular prophet. That'll be the way you want to deal with this.

Well, just another review question. What media did we talk about in terms of how the prophets got their message across to hardened, dull-eared, deaf people? What did they use? PowerPoint? Sorry, didn't say that. Sarah.

Right. Why is that one so important in terms of what we're doing today? Whom are we studying today? Jonah's one, Amos, Hosea, and? Right. Which of those four engages in a profound, life-altering, symbolic action? Hosea, precisely, because he is called to marry a prostitute, about which we're going to speak in a moment.

What other media did they use? Certainly, symbolic actions. I'm sorry, say it again. Well, they're certainly uttering oracles, aren't they? They are going to call on previous scriptures and the previous Torah.

For example, we're going to read Hosea today, and Hosea's going to call their attention to the fact that these people are breaking the Ten Commandments. We'll read sections of Chapter 4 where he's alluding to the Ten Commandments right there in Chapter 4. One other thing: what has Amos got in the last three chapters, particularly Chelsea? Yeah, he's a shepherd, that's true, but in the last three chapters, what characterizes the stuff that we've got there? I'm trying not to give it away. Sarah? Right. I saw the Lord.

I saw this. I saw that. And so a lot of the prophets, as we said last time, are seeing visions, dreaming dreams, and that's the way God is addressing some of these issues.

And then, of course, those are written down and reported, and therefore, that constitutes part of the message. We're going to see a lot of that with Ezekiel as well. So far so good? All right.

Just a little bit in terms of a map to remind ourselves, especially with regard to moving into Jonah, I'm going to deal with these chronologically, by and large, and therefore, we're starting with Jonah, and you're thinking, what's Nahum doing in there? Well, we're doing Nahum at the end today because we're kind of bookending. Jonah's going to talk to Nineveh, and Nahum's going to talk to Nineveh, so even though Nahum's a little bit later than some of the others, we're going to put them together today. By and large, however, the others are going to be pretty much 8th-century prophets.

Here's our map. We talked last time, not last time, a little while ago about Assyria and the expansion of Assyria. Here we've got 9th century Assyria, and you may remember, I know I've said this three times now, but just to remind you that Assyria is an ugly, brutal empire, and I read you those excerpts from Ashurnasirpal II, who flays people, takes the skins off them, puts those skins on pillars, and does all sorts of other really heinous kinds of things.

They're odious, right? And so that's the mindset that Israel has when they're thinking of Assyria. They know how brutal Assyria is, and of course, this gives us maybe a little bit of a feeling as to why Jonah would hightail it in the other direction. Instead of being really keen to go to Nineveh and preach to Nineveh, he's skipping off towards Tarshish.

One can understand why when you've got that, and especially by the time we get down to the 7th century, we're way out over this way, all right? Later empire. Now, the people we're talking about today are the 8th century, and Assyria's on the move, and therefore, the whole northern kingdom, which are the people being addressed today, are pretty much feeling the pressure of this powerful, brutal empire. Keep

that in mind when we're reading, particularly the book of Jonah, or talking about the book of Jonah.

Well, that brings us to Jonah. A little bit of historical background. I read this before, but you know what? We're going to do it again.

Turn to 2 Kings, chapter 14, because we've got a mention there of the king and a prophet, and that prophet happens to be named. The king is Jeroboam. It's our Jeroboam II, just to remind ourselves of this, and interestingly enough, verse 24 says he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, so from the covenant perspective, this Jeroboam is no better than anybody else.

However, in verse 25, he's the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Levo Hamath, that's way up north, to the Sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea, in other words, in accordance with the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, spoken through, and here of course is our connection, his servant Jonah, son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath-Hepher. Now, when you begin to read the book of Jonah, Jonah is the son of Amittai, and so although there are some people who say they're not the same person, I think it's probably rather likely that they are the same person. I don't know how many sons of Amittai there were floating around back then, but the very fact that scriptures are going to identify both of these that way, I think, is indicative of the fact we're talking about the same guy here, and so this is when he's prophesying.

As I've said, the terrifying prospect of Assyria continuing to gobble up pieces of territory and do so in very unpleasant ways is what Jonah has in his mental framework. The purpose of the book, I would suggest to you, is to demonstrate that God is sovereign. That's not new to us.

In fact, we could probably say one of the major purposes of scripture is to demonstrate that God is sovereign and right, along with other things, but how is it that God's sovereignty is so apparent in this book? What are the ways? By the way, Jonah's an unusual prophetic book because Jonah is the one book of all the writing prophets that's narrative. We don't read a lot about Jonah's preaching—five words in Hebrew.

I think I said this last time. Only five words Jonah utters in Hebrew. English is a little bigger.

Yet, 40 days in Nineveh is going to be overthrown. That's the extent of his preaching, but we still have it throughout the narrative as it's cast to us in four chapters. The second chapter of poetry is true; we have profound demonstrations of God's sovereignty. How? What are the ways that God demonstrates he is sovereign in this book? Rebecca? Yeah, Jonah's really intent on getting away from this mission as fast

as possible, and yet God controls all these things to make sure that Jonah lands up back in Nineveh.

Now, what are some of those specifics that God's controlling to bring Jonah back to where he's supposed to be? The fish, certainly the fish. What else? Yeah, that thing that grows up over him. It's a ki kayon in Hebrew, whatever that is, a gourd, a tree, or something.

By the way, Jonah is your classic self-absorbed prophet. He really is. I mean, talk about a piece of psychological jargon from today.

Self-absorbed, I mean, we're all concerned not to be self-absorbed, although we usually all are, but Jonah is. He's a very interesting pattern of somebody who's just completely into his own concerns. But what are some of the other ways of sovereignty? Let's get back to that question.

We've got God bringing up this shady tree and then, of course, removing it later on. We've got the fish. What else do we have? What other aspects of nature come into this picture? Yes, Matt? The storm.

The storm is good. I'll get to you in a minute. Right.

The sea is under God's control as well. Now, don't think for a moment that this is just the sea. Keep in mind that for Israelites and the ancient Near Eastern folks, the sea was terrifying.

It was the abyss. It was the location of chaos. It scared the living daylights out of them.

And so, for God to control the sea was pretty important. Likewise, just a little bit of a parallel, for Jesus to control the sea when he's on the Sea of Galilee the same kind of thing. You probably did this in New Testament when you were talking about Jesus' control of the sea.

Chelsea, what were you going to say? The same thing. Okay. We've got the sea, the storm.

It starts up. It goes back down again. Two other things we really need to note.

These are issues that have to do with nature so far. Right. Every one of them is nature.

What else is so evident, maybe a little bit more spiritual, if you will? It's probably not the right word that we want to use, but how about God's demonstrating to Jonah that whom God wants to repent will indeed he'll bring it about? All right.

Therefore, when God offers through Jonah this opportunity to Nineveh and the King of Nineveh to repent in the face of the prospect of judgment and destruction, that happens. That makes Jonah furious, but it's God's choice. And so, he's sovereign over the lives and the souls of humankind as well.

Now we know that, but here's a wonderful illustration of his offering grace, repentance, and forgiveness to the enemies. By the way, the other one that I think we probably want to have in our minds is the lots. The sailors cast lots to try to figure out who on earth is responsible for this horrible thing that's happening to them, and it falls on Jonah.

So very interesting. God's sovereignty is demonstrated in this book. I've already talked, I think, enough about the fact that when God commands him to go to Nineveh, Jonah is scared.

He's probably afraid on at least two fronts, perhaps more, but I'll suggest two to you. First of all, he's probably afraid for his own skin. He's an Israelite.

What's it going to be like to go to a place that does the kinds of things that that cruel empire does? But let me suggest that maybe he's also afraid of what might happen to his own countrymen. He'd probably most like, more than anything else, to see Nineveh overturned and destroyed and that brutal, cruel power done in. And if his own countrymen find out that he's gone to Nineveh to preach a message of grace and forgiveness to them, there are two possibilities there.

They're going to be really vexed with him for treason kinds of issues, and they're also going to maybe suffer later on if Nineveh continues as it does, if the Assyrians continue. So, there are some very significant issues going on here. Well, we've already mentioned to a degree the whole business, and you've, you know, this is a story I know that you know from Sunday school, so I don't have to rehash this one at length, but keep in mind that all of these things, the storm, what's going on with the sea, Jonah's swirling down to the depths of the sea.

When you read chapter two, Jonah is feeling like he is in the depths of Sheol at that point. And the fish is the rescue for him. You know, sometimes we think of this as the terrible place.

The fish is the rescue. He's swirled down to the absolute depths, the base of the mountains, things are terrible, and then he will be resting, and it's actually as that poem presents it from that context that he will then begin to seek God. And then, of

course, the fish vomits him out on dry land, and he finally goes to Nineveh the way he should.

To probably everybody's astonishment, the king of Nineveh orders that they all don sackcloth, right on down to the animals as well. This is national repentance. And, of course, what's Jonah's problem at this point? Well, he's still a little vexed.

In chapter four, verse one, Jonah is greatly displeased and becomes angry, and he says, Dear Lord, isn't this what I said was going to happen all along? That's why I left to flee to Tarshish. I knew you are gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Those are the exact characteristics of the covenant God.

Do you remember when the Lord revealed himself to Moses after the golden calf incident? When Moses wanted to see the Lord, the Lord hid him in the cleft of the rock and then passed by, and then in Exodus 34, he says, I am the Lord, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, forgiving iniquity. These are the exact same things that Jonah is calling on as well. He knows that about God, and that's what's vexing him.

He doesn't want Nineveh to experience those wonderful, wonderful blessings that he thinks are only reserved for Israel. So, God has to give him another little lesson from the natural realm on God's sovereignty before he finally hits the punchline. Verse 11, chapter four, Nineveh has more than 120,000 people who can't tell their right hand from the left, should I not be concerned about that great city as well? Now, is this the last we see of Jonah? What does your lecture outline tell you? We've got more to talk about, don't we? Who else mentions Jonah? The right answer here is really Jesus.

Isn't it fun to know the right answer is Jesus, not only in Sunday school, but here too from time to time? Jesus refers to Jonah. A little map, first of all. This is a map that's talking about prophetic activity.

It's probably a little fuzzy, especially for those of you in back. But just in case, Nazareth is right about here, and if you can see it, let's just get this out. Nazareth and Gath-Hepher are next door to each other.

Isn't that interesting? When Jesus is talking about the sign of Jonah, I'm going to read Matthew chapter 12 in just a moment. There are parallel passages that I've got for you as well. But in Matthew chapter 12, we've got his longest reference to the sign of Jonah.

He's not just sort of picking this out of the sky. He's talking about a prophet who was a next-door neighbor if you will. We've done this before.

Do you remember when Elisha raised the woman's son from the dead in Shunem? And then Jesus raises a widow's son from the dead in Nain, and they're right next door to each other? This is a small country, but these are really, really proximate to each other. Jesus is drawing on a prophet who lives near his hometown. Chapter 12 verse, where are we? 38.

Pharisees and teachers of the law say, teacher, we'd like to see a miraculous sign. By the way, in case you hadn't figured it out yet, they'd been seeing sign after sign after sign after sign after sign after sign. Jesus has been feeding people, healing people, casting out demons.

It's not like they haven't seen a sign. They're a hardened generation. That's the point here.

And he says, verse 39, a wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign. None's going to be given it except the sign of Jonah, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the son of man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

And the men of Nineveh are going to stand up in judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. So, there are actually two signs here in some ways or two things they're supposed to learn. One is Jonah's time spent in the belly of the fish, and as I said a moment ago, that was his rescue from hell and the torment of swirling around in the abyss.

That is a paradigm for Jesus spending those three days in the grave. Jesus had already been through the hell and the torment of hanging on the cross and enduring the wrath of God. Those are parallel.

When Jesus is in the grave, it's a rest. It's a rest. And then he rises from the dead.

Jonah comes out of the fish. I mean, there are some very interesting parallels all along here. And then, of course, the rising up of the men of Nineveh, because they repented even out of their most cruel and brutal backgrounds, and yet the hardness of hearts of the Pharisees and others round about were keeping the people of Jesus' day from repenting.

Well, that's Jonah. Are you ready to go on? As you're thinking, yeah, Caelan, where's Tarshish? Yeah, probably most people are going to locate Tarshish in the general vicinity of Spain. Now, there are some differences of opinion, but that's generally.

So, the idea is he's heading as far west as was known at that particular point in time. It's supposed to go east, but it zips off to go west instead. Somewhere along the Mediterranean coast, probably.

Yeah, he's got time to get to Nineveh all by himself. And by the way, lest you think of that, there's somebody who used to preach a sermon on Jonah that said he arrived in Nineveh looking like he'd all been, you know, white and shriveled because he'd been in the belly of the fish. That's nonsense.

It would take him a good half a month to get to Nineveh. The sun would tan him up real well by then, probably. Did I over-answer your question? Okay.

That's Jonah. Let's go on to Amos. Jonah's easy to remember.

We've grown up with Jonah in Sunday school. These next are the ones that I'm going to have you think of things to help you remember what Amos is all about, okay? First of all, we need to do a map again, and we need to do a couple of things on this map. Amos is prophesying at about the same time, another Jeroboam II and Uzziah.

This is helpful because Amos actually tells us this. So, he's going to be a contemporary. And when did the northern kingdom fall to Assyria? Let's spit that date out.

722. Good. And so, Amos is prophesying just about a generation before that's going to happen.

Now, there are a couple of other things we want to keep in mind. Amos is a sheep herder and a tender of sycamore fig trees. I can't even talk today.

Where's Tekoa? Well, zip zap, we have an arrow right there. So, he's from someone in the southern kingdom. Tekoa's in the tribal area of Judah.

Just a little bit of trivia for those of you who might want to think about this: sycamore fig trees do not grow out around Tekoa. That is a very much shepherding area. The sycamore fig trees would probably be growing more out over here, in the Shephelah area, Philistine Plain.

Some people suggest that Amos was probably a migrant worker, did sycamore figs at some points in time when the season was right and then was out over here. This makes him the equivalent of a good blue-collar worker. He's not one of the court prophet types.

Now, he gets called, and he's compelled. He has no choice about it. Let me read for you chapter 3 and I need to leave Matthew and get back to Amos.

A series of rhetorical questions. Do two walk together unless they've agreed to do so? Does a lion roar in the thicket when he's no prey? Does he growl in his den when he's caught nothing? Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when no snare has been set? The answers to these are obvious, right? And then, in verse 7, surely the sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plans to the prophets. The lion has roared. Who won't fear? The sovereign Lord has spoken.

Lion, sovereign Lord, who can but prophesy? Amos doesn't have a choice in this prospect. And where is he compelled to prophesy? Well, that's the scary part. Here's Bethel right there.

He's got to cross the boundary. He's got to do what that unnamed man of God, remember him? The first kings split in the kingdom way back when. Who was the king then? Some very interesting echoes here.

Who was the king of the north when the kingdom split? It's Jeroboam, isn't it? Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. And here we are. Here we are.

History's kind of, it's echoing. It's repeating itself. Because here's Amos from Tekoa, a named prophet from Judah this time around, who gets called to go to the altar at Bethel and pronounce against it, during the reign of Jeroboam II.

And don't think people around there wouldn't have their antennas up. There'd be those who would be remembered—a remnant, yes, no doubt.

But still, there would be those reverberations there. The other thing we want to note on this map is that we're not going to see the map again, and yet I'm going to do something with Nations roundabout. How does Amos start out his prophecy? Chapter one.

For three sins of somebody and for four, I will not withdraw my hand. And then it tells what the sins are. And who are those somebodies? Well, they start with Damascus.

And then they go to Gaza. And then they go to Edom. And then they go to Tyre.

And then they go to Ammon. And then they go to Moab. You know, Amos is making his way around the nations around Israel.

After he goes to these foreigners, he doesn't go to them, but he talks about them. He's alluding to them. After he mentions them, then he gets a little closer to home.

You know, we always like to hear somebody criticizing somebody else that we really don't like very much. I mean, maybe you don't do that. You're all just good people.

But, you know, some of us who are sort of unregenerate still and on deep, ugly, dark recesses of our hearts that are prideful, you know, if someone we don't like awfully much gets a piece of criticism that they deserve, we're sitting here thinking, yeah, hand it to him. Deserves it. This happens on the national level.

We're kind of glad when nations really catch it from the UN. Some of them, that is. All right.

You know, the same things are going on. And Amos is a good psychologist. If you're having trouble remembering Amos, think of him, first of all, as a good psychologist.

Of course, the Holy Spirit is inspiring this. I know that. But he starts by getting the people's attention.

He's a man from Judah. He's gone north to Bethel. And what does he do? He doesn't say, you guys are really bad first.

He starts out by talking about Damascus and Gaza and Tyre and Edom and Moab and Ammon and all the things they've done wrong. And, of course, the people of Israel, they felt those pressures. Because what are some of the issues over and over again? These people have engaged in the slave trade, selling off God's people.

Edom was a time engaged in the slave trade. Well, you know, the Israelites are going to just love that kind of condemnation. And then it comes to Judah, which, by the way, is Amos' own territory.

And he's going to condemn Judah, too. And the people in Israel are probably going, yeah, sure, let him have it, turncoat. Right? And then, finally, he comes and spends the rest of his book on Israel.

He's a good psychologist. It works well. Anyway, got to see the map.

And then we have to look at something else. What is this? And it's not a blank space. What's that? Anybody know? A grate.

How do you mean, grate? I mean, you're on the right track. Keep going. Ah, okay, I'm going to correct you a little bit.

Those little holes are not holes to let anything through. They're supposed to have these little pieces of basalt in them. So, all of them, in their original form, would have had those little pieces of basalt.

Then, think of that as being about four feet from bottom to top. Does that help a little bit? Nick? Thresher, good. How does it work? Okay, actually, you're on the right track.

You lay this thing down so that this is on the surface of where your grain is. You put weight on it, and then you drag it across the grain. And therefore, it breaks up those hulls and husks that are on the grain, and then you throw it up in the air and that sort of thing.

All right, now, why is that important? Why on earth am I showing this to you in conjunction with Amos chapter 1? Amos chapter 1. I'm not going to read all these, but isn't it interesting that in a talk with Damascus, which is our first one here, she, Damascus, threshed Gilead with sleds having iron teeth? Okay, that was a threshing sledge that we just looked at. That had basalt teeth.

Put iron teeth in it, and think of its being dragged over people instead of grain. That's the picture. That's the picture.

Such horrible destruction. And it's not going to be the only one that does genocide. Ammon is going to do that as well.

Where's Gilead, by the way? I forgot to point that out on the map. Does anybody remember where Gilead is? Ginger, you're pointing east of the Jordan River, right? It's that area that is sort of in between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, but it's east of the Jordan River where two and a half tribes settled, always being fought over. And, of course, Ammon and Damascus are also going to fight over that area.

And whenever they have a chance to show their muscle a little bit, they don't do it in a very gracious way. So anyway, here are some of our problem people and the things they did wrong. Damascus, genocide, those kinds of issues.

Philistia, selling Hebrew slaves. Notice who the slave trader is. Edom here.

Tyre, selling whole communities. Edom. Edom seems to be very much involved in this slave trade issue.

And again, these are not old issues. If you follow the anything on international news, you know that sex slave trade is a big deal right now. There's still stuff going on like this.

The prophets, as I said on Friday, are timely. They are timely. Their message is timely.

Edom is pursuing his brother. Who's his brother? Jacob, of course, the descendants of Jacob, the Israelites. So, the Edomites and the Israelites were not getting along.

Ammon, destruction of Gilead. Moab, vengeance, and hatred. Judah.

Oh well, all Judah did was reject the Torah. Not nearly so bad, right? Wrong. It's when a people rejects the Torah that they have begun down that horrible slope that lands them up where these other people were.

Because we need the Torah to keep ourselves on the right track in terms of our own personal righteousness and our own social systems. Okay. Judah rejected the Torah and embraced idolatry.

That's the first chapter plus a little bit of the second chapter. And as I said, that's how Amos starts. And then he spends all the rest of his message on Israel.

What he does over and over and over again is to condemn the people for all their injustices. If you want to preach a message on social injustice, because, of course, that's all the big thing right now. We all talk in social justice.

I'm not against social justice, but I'd like to see the equivalent time given to personal righteousness. I really would.

But if you want to preach a message on social justice, go to Amos. It's there because people were using other people in every way you could possibly imagine.

All right? And there's obviously the idolatry there. There's complacency. Amos is our wonderful prophet who, in chapter four, verse one, says, hear this, you cows of Bashan on Mount Sinai.

You women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, bring us some drinks. Okay? Just the most heinous, self-serving, complacent, head-in-the-sand types. So anyway, Amos is very helpful in that way.

Amos is the one who begins to raise our antennas with regard to the day of the Lord. Chapter five. Woe to you, verse 18, who longs for the day of the Lord.

Now let me just kind of set the stage for the day of the Lord discussion that's going to continue on with some of our other prophets. Because see, here's how it went. When the Israelites had in their mind the day of the Lord, they were thinking of it as follows.

Yay, great time. Everybody else who's just really mean and nasty is going to get it from God, and we're going to just be ushered right into his presence. That's kind of how they were thinking.

I know I didn't say it very nicely, but you got the point? Amos begins a thread that's going to continue and that is the day of the Lord is going to be pretty sobering for God's people—woe to you who long for the day of the Lord. Guess what? It's going to start with judgment for God's people.

I used to kind of laugh when I used to teach at another college years ago and my students would always say, oh, I hope the rapture comes before the next exam. And I would laugh and first say, your theology's all mixed up, it ain't going to happen that way. And secondly, they've got a whole different view in terms of what that rapture's going to involve, right? God's people are going to, you know, we're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ too at some point.

So, keep that in mind, keep that day of the Lord concept in mind, we're coming back to that. A couple more things we need to talk about in terms of Amos. Amos has some visions, as we said right at the beginning.

Chapter 7 through 9, the Lord showed me and I saw. First he sees locusts, but God relents and doesn't bring that. And then he sees judgment by fire, but God relents.

It's this word that means God, in his great and deep compassion, doesn't carry through with what his intention would have been to destroy them. But there's a plumb line then, and then the Lord says, I'm setting a plumb line among my people, I will spare them no longer. Chapter 7 verse 8, the high places will be destroyed, the sanctuaries be ruined.

With my sword, I'm going to rise against the house of Jeroboam. And, of course, at that point, the priest says, treason. Go home, Amos, because now Amos has mentioned rising against the house of Jeroboam.

That's bad news. Well, we have one other thing as well, and that is Amos cited in the New Testament, and you've all had New Testament so you probably know this particular sermon. Jerusalem Council, is that ringing any bells? Acts chapter 15, James is speaking, and James is using the Septuagint, the Greek translation here which is somewhat different from the Hebrew.

But he's taking this wonderful passage. On that day, in chapter 9, verse 11, I'm going to restore David's fallen tent. In other words, Israel is going to be restored and revived.

There's a day coming. But also, it says they may possess the remnant of Edom and all nations that bear my name. Now, just a quick note, and again I hope you've done this in New Testament, but there is a textual change in the Septuagint.

So, as the Septuagint reads it, that's the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. I think you all know that. As the Septuagint reads it, it says, so that all men may seek me.

Possessing and seeking doesn't sound like the same thing, and they're not. But the Hebrew behind them is very easily changed. That one letter can be changed in copying just a little bit, and that may be the change that has the Greek translation than of a Hebrew word that means to seek ends up being in there.

And here's what's fun, and I know I've done that way too fast. Come and take Biblical hermeneutics, where we deal with that issue at length. The really neat thing, however, is that God, the Holy Spirit, as he's working with the scriptures, as James is speaking, as Luke is writing in Acts, is going to be going to use the translation that best fits that particular circumstance as James is addressing, the embrace of the nations who seek God, i.e., the Gentiles are going to be allowed into this covenant community.

Now I know I've done that way too fast. The point is that Amos is being quoted here. We need to get on to Hosea.

Otherwise, I'd spend another five minutes there. Well, how should we talk about Hosea? What thing are you going to remember about Hosea? If we're thinking of these major bullets to try and remember our minor prophets, what are you going to remember Hosea by? Trevor? His marriage. His marriage to a prostitute.

That's what we want to think of, and then we want to think of God as the wounded lover because that's exactly what's going on here, and Hosea does it very poignantly. He's also talking, preaching, speaking, prophesying, and living his life in the context of Jeroboam. Chapter 1, verse 1. During the reign of Jeroboam, son of Jehoash, king of Israel.

And, of course, the big issue is his marriage. Verse 2, When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, Go, take for yourself an adulterous wife, literally a woman of prostitution and children of unfaithfulness. And here's the reason why.

Because the land, if you're looking at the second part of that bullet up there, the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord. The land is guilty of the vilest adultery. Again, God's covenant with his people is presented over and over again as a marriage.

A marriage at Sinai, the covenant that's stated there. And therefore, adultery is the way that idolatry is being represented here. So, he married Gomer, daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

Notice that this is the one place where it says, bore to him a son. The first son, Jezreel, appears to be Hosea's kid. As you read on, he has a daughter, but this time it doesn't say she bore that daughter to Hosea.

It simply says that Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. She's named Lo ruhamah, which means no compassion or not loved. And then, verse 8, after she had weaned Lo ruhamah, Gomer had another son.

Again, not mentioned. Again, when you're reading the Hebrew Bible, when you're reading scriptures, little words make a difference. The first son is born to Hosea.

The other children are not. And that, too, is representative. Israel is God's people, and they're faithful for a very short time at first, and then they go straying and being adulterers all the way around.

In chapter 2, there's a poem that describes, in very poignant terms, both Hosea's wife's and God's wife's idolatry. And then in chapter 3, there's the command to bring her back and take her back, which Hosea does. That's the whole scenario.

And then, from chapter 4 on, we have the ongoing oracles that describe what's happening here. Let me talk a little bit about chapter 4 and, in fact, read parts of it because we talked about three kinds of oracles. In fact, do you remember the three kinds of oracles? The lawsuit was one of them, obviously.

What were the other two? Woe. Woe to you. Woe to you.

And then there was the blessing oracle as well. But chapter 4 does start in classic lawsuit terms. Let me read for you.

Here is the word of the Lord, you Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you. There's no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. Now, listen to verse 2 very clearly and tell me what's here.

What are you hearing? There's only cursing, lying, murder, stealing, adultery. What are you hearing? Yeah, representative samples of the Ten Commandments. And they, of course, have done all of that, one after another in succession.

They break all bounds. Bloodshed follows bloodshed. Because of this, the land mourns.

But let no person bring a against a priest. You stumble day and night, and the prophets stumble with you. My people, this is the part that begins to get really brutal if you haven't gotten it yet.

My people are destroyed from a lack of knowledge. Because you've rejected knowledge, I reject you as my priests. Because you've ignored the law of your God, I'll ignore your children.

It will be like people, like priests. I'll punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds. You getting the picture here? When we're lax on knowing what God says in his covenant, we're fair game for falling far away.

And then God has to bring some serious punishment and chastisement. You know, as I said on Friday and I said about a half an hour ago, the message of the prophets is not an easy one to hear. The prophets are not speaking to those nasty old people out there.

They're speaking to us. They're speaking to us. All right.

If you read chapter 4 continually, I won't do this, but you'll notice, at least in the NIV, that the word prostitution occurs about six times, interfaced with adultery. Right? And that was Hosea's situation, and that's the people's situation. They are prostitutes leaving God and prostituting themselves after all manner of other things that seem to please them a little bit better.

God's response, well, this is pretty amazing. How does a wounded lover respond? The reality of this message that's in the book of Hosea, when we boil it down to what it's all about, is something that I'm sure many of you are very aware of, either from family situations or friends, right? This is not strange to us because adultery is rife, and it breaks up people and it hurts people terribly. How does a wounded lover respond? Well, with anger, of course, and it's justified anger.

With a profound sense of hurt. Hurt that just rips you apart with a desire to punish in some way.

And yet, if the person is really a lover who is committed by vows to that covenant, with a willingness to keep on loving in spite of it all. And that's how God does this. Look at some of the illustrations of it.

Chapter 5, verse 12. I'm a moth to a fry. I'm like a rot to the people of Judah.

What are moths like? They're little insects, and they bother you a little bit, right? Flip them away. They eat your wool clothes, and they do it insidiously, quietly until

suddenly you open up this wonderful scarf, and it's got holes in it. It rots the same way.

Quiet, destructive. God says I'm going to be like that. But you know what? People don't pay too much attention to it because it's too quiet.

So, he goes on and he says, verse 14, I'm going to be like a lion to a fry. I'm like a great lion to Judah. I'll tear them to pieces.

I'll go away. Then I'll go back to my place until they admit their guilt and then they will seek my face. They will earnestly seek me.

God tries to get their attention quietly. They continue to go their own way and finally slaps them upside the head until they admit their guilt. That's one way he responds.

But let's look at a couple of other ones as well. And again, I don't have time to read all of them. They seem to have been engaged quite a bit in all the right words and all the right activities.

But God says in chapter 6, verse 6, I desire mercy, not sacrifice, acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. Don't just go doing all your stuff and call it enough. Mercy.

Repentance. That's what Hosea and God are seeking. Well, he goes on.

Chapter 9, verse 15, I hated them. I'll no longer love them. And yet, interestingly enough, when you get to chapter 11, verse 8, how can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over Israel? How can I treat you this way? My heart is changed within me.

My compassion is aroused. I won't carry out my fierce anger. I won't devastate Ephraim again.

For I am God, not a man. I'm the holy one among you. I will not come in wrath.

Now, there's a lot of stuff in between there. But you see, all those emotions that I just described to you a moment ago for which I gave you bullets, the message of Hosea spells those out. We see God demonstrating all of them as well with his profound love for these wayward people.

Well, we need to keep on. Hosea mentions or is mentioned quite a bit in the New Testament. I'll just run through these fast.

You can look them up on your own. The whole idea of not my people and yet my people, that thing that we saw in chapter 1 and in chapter 2 at the end. Paul's going to pick up on that in Romans with regard to Jews and Gentiles.

And Peter will also use the expression, although he's going to keep it pretty much in the construct of Jewish believers. In the passage I just read to you, Jesus will say in the face of people who are, well, seem to be kind of resting on the activities that they do. And Jesus says, no, I desire mercy, not sacrifice.

Matthew, as he's describing the fact that Jesus' parents went down to Egypt and didn't come back until the death of Herod. Out of Egypt, I have called my son, chapter 11, verse 1. Now, in Hosea, that's talking about the Israelites being taken out of Egypt as the whole exodus paradigm, their redemption from that context. Matthew is going to use it to demonstrate that in Jesus' life, in his place as God incarnate, he is going to relive or embody national Israel and the experiences of national Israel.

Well, we also have, this is kind of a paraphrase here, but what you have in chapter 10 verse 8 about the mountains falling on us. People will call the mountains to fall on us. That's going to show up both in Luke 23 and also in Revelation in terms of last judgment.

And then finally, in our wonderful passage that you studied in the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 15, the classic passage on the resurrection. Hosea is quoted, oh death, where is your victory? Oh grave, where is your sting? Because the resurrection, of course, has overcome that. So wonderful passages from Hosea that get cited in the New Testament.

Now, we're not done. This is our section of prophets who are 8th century prophets talking primarily to the north. But as I said, we want to bookend our Jonah experience with just one quick look at Nahum.

Three chapters, gets kind of lost there sometimes. Nahum is our prophet. We don't know where he's from.

Says he's an Elkoshite, but we don't know where that is. What we can figure out is a window, that's my second bullet up there, a window during which he prophesied. Don't have precise things, but we get a window because he's prophesying the fall of Nineveh.

And we know that Nineveh fell in 612 BC to the Babylonians. And interestingly enough, he mentions Naoamon, which is the Hebrew Bible name for Thebes. And we know from outside sources that that fell in 650.

And because he mentions that and mentions the fall of it in chapter 3, then we know that he's prophesying after that. So sometime in that little window. Now I can tell you, although I don't have time to describe it, that we do have, interestingly enough, some extra-biblical sources that talk about the fall of Nineveh.

Babylonian Chronicles, one place we can go. There's also some good archaeological evidence. And what's fun is that what you see described in Nahum about outer cities and fortresses being plucked off like fruit, about the river playing a key part in actually breaking down and flooding the city, you know, those are alluded to in Nahum in very poetic fashion.

You see those unfolding in the Babylonian Chronicles and also the archaeology allows us a little look at that as well. As you read this book, you know what? It works poetically. It works poetically.

In English, you can do it a little bit, even more so in Hebrew. As you read the chapter, it sounds like war. It's not long flowing poetic sentences that are exalted.

It's punchy, with two and three words, galloping horses, and swords flashing. It's the kind of thing that you would expect: very short, very choppy. Poetry is used to convey the message.

What's the message? Well, very briefly, chapter one talks about the sovereignty of God over and over and over again. In fact, chapter one is a little bit troubling to some of us who like to put God in a nice box. You know, our God, we reduce to being, well, just kind of what we want him to be.

And he certainly is nice and good. Nahum throws that picture all out of kilter. In the first couple of verses, we have a God who takes vengeance.

And the word avenge is mentioned three times right away. This is a God who avenges and particularly avenges the damage and the destruction done to his people. And that's the second part of this.

Nineveh will end violently. And it'll end violently because they have done the kinds of atrocities that I read to you about a week ago. Well, on that happy note, you know, most of the prophets were going to end on pretty sobering notes.

But that's all right. Perhaps we need that from time to time. See you on Wednesday when we'll pick up with Isaiah, an absolute favorite.