

Lesson for March 15, 2009

## Old Testament Survey

### The Books of Hosea, Joel and Amos

Beginning with the book of Hosea, we have what are commonly called the Minor Prophets. These prophets were certainly no less important than the books called the Major Prophets, but are simply smaller in content.

Hosea and Amos were contemporaries and prophesied to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Hosea is often called “the prophet of Israel’s zero hour.” As a nation, Israel had degraded into a deep spiritual depravity of idol worship and sexual deviance. As a result, God could no longer tolerate their rebellion and His judgment could no longer be delayed.

#### The Book of Hosea

The central theme of the book of Hosea is “return to the Lord.” Hosea compared the nation of Israel’s rebellion to his adulterous wife who strayed from him. The same qualities that Hosea had in regard to Gomer his wife are the same qualities that God had when dealing with rebellious Israel. Hosea showed patience, compassion, redeeming, chastening and restoration when dealing with his wife.

Even Hosea’s children were given names to symbolize God’s attitude towards Israel’s rebellion against Him. Jezreel means “God scatters,” Lo-Ruhamah means “not obtained mercy,” and Lo-Ammi means “not my people.” Within the nation there were false priests, false prophets and immorality, which was the result of Israel’s retreat into reversionism.

What we can learn from the book of Hosea is that God always deals with sin and rebellion among His people. They are dealt with individually and nationally as God chooses. As believers in Jesus Christ, God also deals with Church Age believers when they sin or rebel against Him. As a believer, you never “get away with” sin. As a loving father, God will discipline His children when necessary. (Hebrews 12:6-15)

The return to fellowship with God and execution of His will begins with naming or acknowledging known sins to Him. Then we must begin the process of renewing our minds, not by attempting to change our behavior, which comes as a *result* of the renewed mind. The mind of the believer is renewed by the consistent intake and application of Bible doctrine. Therefore, the believer involved in reversionism must *renew his mind*, not “change his ways” (transformation, not reformation). Right thinking leads to right motivation, which leads to right action.

This process of transformation, of course, takes place first in the mind, in accordance with God's standards of righteousness and truth. Righteousness (a right relationship with God) not only refers to the righteousness of Christ that the believer receives at salvation, it also refers to a righteous lifestyle. A righteous lifestyle is the execution of the unique Christian life, not the practice of legalism. Another way to explain this is: make your experience in Christ align with your position in Christ. Truth refers to Bible doctrine that is circulating in the mind of the believer.

### The Book of Joel

Joel, which means Jehovah is God, was a prophet to the nation of Judah. The central theme of the book of Joel is "the Day of the Lord," which refers to the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. Before this happens, Joel warned the nation of the impending judgment from God because of their rebellious ways. Joel also prophesied the giving of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, God's judgment on all nations and the restoration of Judah as a nation. (Acts 2:1-21)

The *filling* and the *indwelling* of God the Holy Spirit are not the same, and should not be confused. At the moment a person trusts Christ as Savior, he is permanently *indwelt* by the Holy Spirit. After salvation, the believer is commanded to be *filled* with the Spirit, which is temporary and is lost when he commits any sin. To be filled is to be controlled by or empowered by the Holy Spirit in the same manner as a person is controlled by alcohol when they are intoxicated. We choose to allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives by allowing Him to control our thinking. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ." This means we must have the Word of God stored in our souls. It is this doctrinal information that the Holy Spirit uses to control our lives. Divine Viewpoint Thinking produces Divine Production.

The filling of the Holy Spirit is for every believer in Christ. The purpose of this filling is to empower the believer to live the Christian Way of Life. When a believer is living the Christian Way of Life, it brings glory and honor to Christ. All believers are immediately filled with the Holy Spirit the moment they trust Christ as their Savior. The first time we sin after salvation however, we lose the filling of the Holy Spirit and we are out of fellowship with God. In order to restore both the filling of the Holy Spirit and our fellowship with God, we must simply name our known sins to God. (I John 1:9) We are then commanded to move forward with the execution of the Christian Way of Life, which the Scripture calls "walking in the light." (I John 1:5-10) The filling of the Holy Spirit is potential depending on the volition (free will) of the believer. It is also a command and literally means "keep on being filled with the Spirit."

### The Book of Amos

Amos was a herdsman and was called by God to prophesy mainly to Israel, but ultimately to both nations (Israel and Judah). The central theme of the book is “can two walk together, except they be agreed?” Obviously this is a reference to the relationship between God and His chosen people Israel. Israel like many nations had turned its back on God and chosen to ignore His statutes and commandments. As a nation, they seemed more interested in the worldly pleasures of life, which they enjoyed during the reign of Jeroboam. Immorality, greed and the oppression of the poor were the order of the day.

Amos began his ministry by denouncing the surrounding nations and pronouncing judgment upon them. The next denouncement was on the nation of Israel for the rejection of the law of God. Amos continued with his message, pointing out the fact that Israel deserved even greater punishment than did the surrounding nations because they had knowledge of God and His mandates. Greater privilege always demands greater responsibility from God’s viewpoint.

### Privilege and Opportunity

Never before in the history of the world has the believer in Christ had the privilege and the opportunity that is afforded him today. The Church Age in which we live is an unparalleled dispensation with numerous advantages for the believer. The privileges and opportunities that we have been given are not only unique, they are “above and beyond all that we could ever think or imagine.” (Ephesians 3:13-21)

Jesus Christ has secured forever the *strategic victory* (the skillful planning and management in getting the better of the adversary) over Satan. At salvation this victory places the believer in a place of maximum strength with the potential to win the *tactical victory* (the procedure for gaining advantage or success over the adversary) over Satan, the World (Cosmic) System and the Sin Nature. Our union with Christ (Positional Sanctification) guarantees the opportunity to overcome the obstacles that are placed before us (or that we place before ourselves) in order to execute the Christian Way of Life and glorify God while we are on earth.

Many privileges are given to the believer at the moment of salvation and many are given after salvation. However, opportunities must be seized by personal volition. As a believer, you are the most privileged person on the face of the earth, but at the same time you may be missing the opportunities for fantastic blessing by not executing God’s plan, purpose and will for your life. Tactical victory comes over a period of time as the believer makes thousands of right

decisions regarding God, himself, others and circumstances. Winning the tactical victory is done by the believer who is being empowered by God the Holy Spirit as he organizes his life around right priorities: Jesus Christ must be the most important Person in your life, learning and applying accurate Bible doctrine must be placed above personal pleasure or your career, and virtue (a strict adherence to the truth) must drive every decision you make in life. (Ephesians 4:14-15)

Privilege in life is always accompanied by responsibility. This is also true with the Royal Family of God. Our first responsibility, of course, is to God as Royal Priests, and our second responsibility is to others as Royal Ambassadors. Christ's strategic victory secured only *potential* for the tactical victory. As believers, we all have equal privilege and equal opportunity to execute the Christian Way of Life. Some believers will choose to do so and some will not. Those who fail in their responsibility to God will experience a life of misery and unhappiness. Those who choose to embrace and fulfill their responsibility to God will experience a life of peace and happiness.