

unit
2

Goals

Despite the many warnings given by the prophets concerning the Day of the Lord, that great and terrible day when God would pour down His wrath upon His people, the Israelites refused to turn back to God. Just as God's punishment and devastation came at a time the Israelites least expected, the Lord's Second Coming will be like a thief in the night. In this unit, students will learn about preparing themselves to meet the Lord and recognizing the signs of the times. From the book of Jonah, students will also learn that they have to rise above their preoccupations to see the true needs of a pitiful world.

Teacher Devotional

Bobby, a little Skye terrier, belonged to an old shepherd called John Gray. One day, the shepherd dies of pneumonia and is buried in the old Grayfriars Churchyard. The next morning, the curator of the cemetery found Bobby lying on the newly-made mound. But because the cemetery did not allow dogs to be admitted, Bobby had to be driven out.

The next morning the curator found Bobby there again. He was sent out for the second time. The third morning was cold and wet, and the curator once again saw Bobby lying shivering on the grave. Bobby's devotion towards his master later granted him the right to make the churchyard his home, thus the name Grayfriar's Bobby. For the next fourteen years Bobby never spent a night away but faithfully kept constant watch and guard over his master's grave until his own death. What was going on in Bobby's mind as he watched over his master's grave for 14 years? Did he think or hope that his master would return someday? Regardless of the reasons, Bobby leaves us a wonderful example of faithfulness in keeping watch. Have we faithfully kept watch for Christ's coming as we go about our daily lives? Let us not waste the time that God has given to us in seeking our own goals, but to prepare ourselves and to fulfill the duties that God has given us.

Watch and Wait

*"But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch; for you do not know when the time will come."
(Mk 13:32-33)*

Lesson 4

Obadiah, Joel, Amos

Listed Scriptures

Ob 1; Joel 1, 2; Amos 8, 9

Lesson Aim

- 1) Students will learn of the importance of preparing themselves to meet the Lord.
- 2) Students will realize that they will be accountable for every word and deed on the Day of Judgment.

Memory Verse

"On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old." (Amos 9:11)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Ob 1; Joel 1, 2; Amos 8, 9

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



Edom

Edom was a nation that laid south of the Dead Sea. The capital city was Sela, or Petra, meaning "rock." This was a spectacular city discovered by archaeologists a few decades ago. The city was literally carved into rock, and could be entered only by a narrow canyon easy to defend. Edom was occupied by the descendants of Esau, Jacob's twin brother. Throughout history, constant conflict existed between the Edomites and the Israelites:

- a. When the Hebrews left Egypt under Moses, the Edomites denied Israel passage through their lands (cf. Num 20:14-20).

- b. Israel's kings were in constant conflict with Edom:
 Saul (1 Sam 14:47, 48)
 David (2 Sam 8:13, 14)
 Solomon (1 Kgs 11:14-22)
 Jehoram (2 Kgs 8:20-22; 2 Chron 21:8ff)
 Ahaz (2 Chron 28:16)

Locusts

There are ten Hebrew words used in the Bible to refer to locusts. Locusts belong to the class of Orthoptera, i.e., straight-winged. They are of many species. The legs and thighs of these insects are so powerful that they can leap to a height of two hundred times the length of their bodies. A locust will consume its own weight each day and they multiply at an incredible rate. A single female laying her eggs in June could potentially result in eighteen million offspring within four months. There are four different stages of development in the life cycle of the locust:

1. larval stage: black, hopping, wingless;
2. black and yellow with wings and jaws;
3. yellow and fully developed;
4. sexually mature adult.

The devastation they make in eastern lands is often very appalling. The invasions of locusts are the heaviest calamities that can befall a country. Their numbers exceed computation – the Hebrews called them “the countless.” The Arabs knew them as “the darkeners of the sun” since their flight obscures the sun and casts a thick shadow on the earth (Ex 10:15; Jdg 6:5; Jer 46:23; Joel 2:10). Locusts are unable to guide their own flight and are driven by the wind and woe to the countries beneath them if the wind fall and let them alight! They descend unnumbered as flakes of snow and cover the ground. It may be “like the Garden of Eden” before them, but after them is a desolate wilderness. Such an awful visitation swept over Egypt during Moses’ time, consuming before it every green thing, and stripping the trees, till the land was bared of all signs of vegetation. A locust swarm only dies when the wind blows it out to sea.

W A R M U P



A well-known insurance company uses cartoons to advertise their product. One cartoon pictures a piano falling from an upper-story window toward an unsuspecting man below. As it speeds toward its destination, a friend politely asks, “By the way, what’s the name of your insurance company?” “Acme insurance, of course,” the man replies. “Why do you ask?” Disaster often comes unexpectedly.

Have you ever had something sprung on you for which you were totally unprepared? What were some of your thoughts at the time?

Today, we will study how the Israelites were unaware that the full weight of God’s judgment was about to fall upon them. We will also reflect on how we should prepare ourselves to meet the Lord.



Part 1

The Book of Obadiah

The healing of Naaman is a beautiful story about a sinner coming to grace. Naaman, whose name means “pleasantness,” was transformed from being a proud and arrogant man to a contrite and God-fearing person. Naaman’s journey of faith is a representation of the journey that non-believers tread in their search for the truth. Naaman also typifies those in the world today.



A. Author

The author of this book is Obadiah the prophet, whose name means, “worshiper of Yahweh” or “servant of Yahweh.” Thirteen men named Obadiah are mentioned in the Old Testament, but none of these can be identified with any certainty as the author of this book, because nothing is known of his hometown or family. Obadiah was an obscure prophet who probably lived in the southern kingdom of Judah.



B. Date

There are two commonly accepted dates for the prophecies of Obadiah:

- a. Between 840-830 B.C. when King Jehoram and Jerusalem were attacked by a Philistine/Arab coalition (2 Chron 21:16ff).
- b. 586 B.C. when Jerusalem was completely destroyed by the Babylonians (2 Kgs 25; 2 Chron 36). Evidence for Obadiah being a post-exilic prophet can be found in Obadiah verse 20 where the word “exiles” are mentioned and the similarities between the book of Obadiah and the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Ob 1-9; Jer 49:9-22; Ezek 25:12-13; 35:5, 15).

 **C. Themes**

The books of Obadiah and Nahum announce the doom of two separate nations who were enemies of Israel. In each case the charge was the same; the enemy had mistreated God's own, and the Lord was committed to punishing them.

Though the shortest of the Old Testament books, Obadiah carries one of the strongest messages of judgment. Because of her persistent opposition to God's chosen people, Obadiah prophesies the complete destruction of Edom with no possible deliverance.

 **D. Teachings from the Book of Obadiah****a. Edom's pride**

The book of Obadiah states that pride was the cause of Edom's downfall. Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." Several years after the prophecy, Edom was destroyed by Babylon. There were four things that the Edomites were proud of:

1. Proud of their heritage

The Edomites were proud of their inherited advantages. Esau, their ancestor, chose Mount Seir to be their home (Gen 36:7-8). The Edomites were blood relatives of Israel and like their father Esau, they were rugged, fierce and proud warriors with a seemingly invincible mountain home in the hill country of Seir (Gen 36:8-9). Edom's capital at this time was Petra, a city considered impregnable because it was cut into a solid rock cliff and set in a canyon that could be entered only through a narrow gap. Therefore, they became proud and filled with self-confidence. But what Edom perceived as strengths would be their downfall. The safety that they felt with the city "set among the stars" would be sent plummeting from the heights. Though they soared aloft like the eagle, God was to bring them down (Obad 1:3-4). The Edomites felt secure and were proud of their self-sufficiency and merits. They did not realize that there was no lasting security apart from God. Upon what rock-like structures do we base our security? Do we feel secure and confident in the things we possess such as physical beauty, intelligence, wealth or family background? How much security do these things really offer? Instead of being confident of these false securities, we should give thanks to God and use it for the Lord.

2. Proud of their knowledge

The Edomites were proud of their knowledge and its city renowned for its wise

men. The Edomites trusted in the counsels of the wise men to overcome their enemies, but God will destroy the wisdom of the wise and thwart the cleverness of the clever (1 Cor 1:19). Their wisdom and understanding will not be able to deliver them from the impending destruction that God was to bring upon them.

Perhaps like the Edomites, we have relied upon our own knowledge and experience rather than on God. We may do things a certain way based on past successful experiences. But this is not a fool-proof method. From Peter's experience of fishing the whole night and catching nothing, we are reminded that experience and skill does not guarantee success. Our human understanding, expertise and experience are limited and there are too many unknown factors. Proverbs 3:5 therefore reminds us to "trust the Lord with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding; in all our ways acknowledge Him and He will direct our path."

3. Proud of their mighty men

The Edomites were proud of their mighty men (v. 9). There were many warriors in the land of Edom, especially in the city of Teman. The Edomites trusted in their warriors to protect and defend them against the invaders, but history often proves that it is not always the strong who wins the battle (Eccl 9:11). Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain (Ps 127:1).

4. Proud of their allies

The Edomites were proud of their allegiance with many nations (v. 7). By making treaties with the surrounding nations Edom thought they would suffer no harm. However, God told Edom that it is these very allies that will "deceive you and drive you to the border; the confederates will prevail against you; your trusted friends have set a trap under you." God teaches them that reliance upon men and relationships are not sure things. Where do we place our confidence? Do we trust in ourselves or the people around us? (Ps 118:8,9; Ps 44:6; Ps 146:3.) Our best ally is the Lord Jesus Himself. Proverbs 22:11 tells us that with a pure heart and graceful lips, we can make allegiance with the Lord who is our ever present help.

b. Brothers should love one another

The Edomites were the offspring of Esau and blood relatives of the Israelites. In times past the Lord had forbidden the Israelites to invade Edom. God also allowed the Edomites into the camp of God, and gave them Mount Seir as

their inheritance (Gen 36:1,9; Deut 2:4-6; 23:7; Num 21:4). Despite this, Edom did not acknowledge the true God nor deal kindly with his brother. When Israel was attacked by the enemies, of all people the Edomites should have rushed to the aid of their brothers. Instead, they gloated over Israel's problems, delivered the fugitives into the hands of the enemies and even looted Israel's countryside (Ob 14). Because of their lack of mercy, God was to annihilate them.

Have we felt smug towards the misfortunes of others? Have we added to the suffering of those who are already in pain? When we see those around us needing a helping hand, do we fold our hands and say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9). The Lord requires us to dwell in unity (Ps 133:1) and to treat others the way we want to be treated (Mt 7:2,12; 1 Tim 5:8).

c. The kingdom shall be the Lord's

From Obadiah verses 17-21, the prophet predicts how the Edomites would be destroyed and the Israelites restored. During the time of Obadiah's prophecy Edom seemed more likely to survive than Judah. When the Babylonians besieged the city of Judah, the Edomites assisted them and rejoiced at Judah's downfall (Ps 137:7). However, only 5 years later (583 B.C.), the Babylonians attacked Edom. The remnants of Edom settled in the southern parts of Judah. In 70 A.D., both the Edomites and Israelites rebelled against the Roman government but were eventually destroyed. Since then Edom has vanished from the face of the earth while the Israelite nation has reestablished itself as a nation in 1948. No nation that has been destroyed has ever been able to rebuild its nation save Israel. However, the prophecy does not end here. In the end times, the true church, the spiritual Israel, will rise and prosper and rule over Mount Esau.



Part 2
The Book of Joel

 **A. Author**

Although there are several other Joels in the Bible, the prophet Joel is known only from this book. The Hebrew name Yo'el means "Yahweh is God," a name appropriate to a book which emphasizes God's sovereign work in history. We know very little about Joel, only that he was the son of Pethuel. From the frequent references

to Jerusalem, Zion, the temple of God and so on, we can deduce that Joel was a prophet in Jerusalem and his audience was Judah, the southern kingdom.

 **B. Date**

Since the book includes no explicit time references, it cannot be dated with certainty. However, it has been traditionally dated at c.835 B.C., when the young King Joash ruled and Jehoiada the priest served as his mentor (2 Kgs 11; 12). This period seems to fit the text of Joel since the influence of the priesthood appears to be strong and there is no mention of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasion. The prophet refers rather to the enemies of Judah during the earlier period: Tyre, Sidon, Philistia (3:4) Egypt and Edom (3:19). This would have made Joel a contemporary of Elisha.

 **C. Themes**

The book begins by describing a terrible plague of locusts that will come upon the nation. These locusts will cover the land and devour the crops, creating total devastation. The plague of locusts was but a foretaste of the coming Day of the Lord – a time of awesome judgment upon people and nations that have rebelled against God. Joel urges the people to turn from their sins and return to God. God promised that after His people return to Him, He will restore them to their former glory and pour out His Spirit in the end times.

 **D. Teachings from the Book of Joel**

a. The plague of locusts

The book of Joel begins by describing a terrible plague of locusts that will come upon the nation. The cutting locust, the swarming locust, the hopping locust, the destroying locust will strip the trees and the land bare, creating total devastation. What seemed like the Garden of Eden at first would eventually become a desolate wilderness. The locusts consume every green thing, their numbers are innumerable (1:6), their appearance is like a powerful army (cf Rev 9:7; Job 39:20), they move like the sound of rumbling chariots (2:4-5), they march in strict order, they do not swerve from their paths (2:7-9) and the people grow pale at the sight of them. The locust plague was but one of the many disasters that God was to bring upon the people for their sins. In Deuteronomy 28:22 the Lord warned the people of the consequences for departing from Him; "The Lord will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching,

and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish." Today, we see that floods, wildfires, tornadoes, hurricanes and earthquakes happening in different parts of the world are also a consequence of man's failure to acknowledge and fear God. To escape the great calamities of the last days, we need to call upon the Lord and serve Him zealously (Rev 3:10).

b. The promise of the Holy Spirit

Throughout the entire Bible, people such as Moses (Deut 11:14), Isaiah (Is 4:3-4; 32:15; 43:19; 44:3), Ezekiel (Ezek 11:19, 20; 36:26, 27; 37:14; 39:28, 29), Joel (Joel 2:23, 28, 29), Zechariah (Zech 8:12; 10:1; 12:10), Malachi (Mal 4:5,6), John the Baptist (Mt 3:11; Jn 1:32, 33) and the Lord Jesus (Lk 11:13; 24:49; Jn 4:14; 7:37-39; Ac 1:4, 5, 8) have spoken of the downpouring of the Holy Spirit. The prophet Joel elaborates further on how in the last days, God will pour down His Spirit on all those who thirst and seek for Him. The people will prophesy, dream dreams and see visions. God's spirit will descend upon men regardless of race, gender, age or worldly status (1 Cor 12:13). The Holy Spirit will fall in two different time periods, represented by the two seasons of rainfall in Israel. When the Holy Spirit first came down on the Day of Pentecost, Peter rose up and quoted from the book of Joel (Joel 2:23; Ac 2:16-18). This was the time of the autumn (early) rain that fell to establish the church and to plant the seeds of the gospel. The prophecy came to complete fulfillment when God poured down His Spirit once again in the beginning of the 20th century. This was the promised spring rain (latter rain) that was to revive the church of the apostolic times and enable the gospel to be preached to the ends of the world before Christ's Second Coming.

c. The Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord is an important concept in the book of Joel (Joel 2:11, 31; 3:14) and throughout the entire Bible. Joel devotes five passages to describe the signs preceding the Day of the Lord and the day itself (1:15; 2:1-2; 2:11; 2:28-31; 3:14-15). The Day of the Lord is also known as the Lord's Day, the Day belongs to the Lord and the Day of God's wrath (Lam 2:22; Ezek 7:19; 13:5; Zeph 1:14-18; 2:2-3). It refers to the day or time when God will punish mankind through disasters and destruction. What does the Day of the Lord refer to?

1. The locust plague refers to the coming Day of the Lord.
2. The Day of the Lord refers to the day when the Judahites will be taken into captivity. In Joel 2:1-3, 20, it prophesies that on the Day of the Lord, a mighty army from the north will come to destroy and attack Israel (Ezek 38:14-16; 39:2). God uses this army to judge the nations (Joel 3:14; Ezek 38:18,21; 39:4-5) and to manifest His mighty power (Ezek

38:16,23).

3. The Day of the Lord refers to the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus, that great and dreadful day (2:11,31). This is the final period of history when God will judge all nations.

Description of the Day of the Lord	Events in the Last Days
Before the Day of the Lord, God will cause the captives of Judah and Jerusalem to return from Babylon (3:1).	In the end times, the Israelites will be called and chosen by the Lord (Is 11:11-12; Ezek 39:28; cf. Mt 24:32).
The Lord will gather all the nations to the valley of Jehoshaphat (3:2) where they will be judged for the violence upon Judah.	In the Last Day, God will gather the nations before His throne and He will execute judgment. The enemies of Judah represent all those who oppose and persecute the followers of the Lord. When Christ returns, such people will face judgment (2 Thess 1:6-10).
There will be a worldwide battle in the valley of decision (3:9-12).	Before the Judgment Day, there will be a worldwide battle at Armageddon (cf Rev 16:13-16; 19:19; 20:7-8).
The earth will quake and the celestial lights will darken (2:10-11).	These are the signs of the last days (Mt 24:29; Rev 6:12-13). God's wrath will burst forth and the powers of heaven will be shaken and there will be great disasters (Lk 21:26; Rev 16:17-20; Is 13:13).
On that day, the Lord will take vengeance upon the wicked (3:4-7, 21) and judge the nations (3:12).	In the Great Judgment, all men will know that the Lord is God. He will judge and repay every man for what he has done. The wicked will be condemned forever, while the righteous will enjoy eternal rest.
Egypt and Edom will become desolate while Judah will be inhabited forever. In that day, the mountains will flow sweet wine, milk and water. A fountain shall come forth from the house of God (3:18-19).	This is a prefiguration of the true church. In the last days, the Holy Spirit will pour down and establish the spiritual Jerusalem which is the true church. Blessings and grace can be found in abundance to satisfy the thirsting and hungering souls of the world. The believers will bear much spiritual fruit. When the Lord comes, the church will be as a bride lifted up to meet her husband and will dwell with the Lord forever.

Teaching Tips

Have students divide into groups to find the various descriptions of the Day of the Lord in the Book of Joel. Discuss each group's findings.



Part 3

The Book of Amos

A. Author

The author of this book is Amos, whose name means “one who bears heavy burden.” Amos lived in a rustic town six miles south of Bethlehem in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, called Tekoa. Amos was not a professional prophet, but was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees by profession (1:1, 7:14). Although he was born in Judah, Amos was called by God to go to the Northern Kingdom of Israel to be His spokesman there (7:15).

B. Date

According to 1:1, Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah and Jeroboam, king of Israel. Amos ministered after the time of Joel and Jonah and just before Hosea, Micah and Isaiah. At this time Uzziah reigned over a prosperous and militarily successful Judah. In the north, Israel was ruled by the capable King Jeroboam II. Economic and military circumstances were almost ideal, but prosperity only increased immorality and injustice among the people.

C. Themes

During this period, both Israel and Judah were enjoying prosperity and freedom from external threats. Egypt was in a period of decline, Assyria was also in a temporary decline and Babylonia had not yet come on the scene as a major power. Both Israel and Judah squandered the wealth that this period of peace brought them. The rich were becoming richer at the expense of the poor. But instead of using their wealth to serve the needy, the upper classes were deaf to their cries. Bribery and injustice permeated the courts and immorality multiplied. Both nations were on their way to storing up for themselves God's righteous indignation.



D. Teachings from the Book of Amos

The book of Amos opens with denunciations directed at Israel's neighbors and enemies: Damascus, Gaza, Tyrus, Edom, Ammon and Moab. No doubt Israel greeted these denunciations with loud amens. Then Amos turned his attention to Judah and Israel. Israel's sins that Amos enumerated were social sins of Israelite against Israelite, neighbor against neighbor. Amos pronounces judgment on various groups of people for their sins:

a. The self-seeking leaders of Israel (Amos 6:1-7) and the arrogant women of influence (Amos 4:1-3)

God has brought judgment upon the people in Judah and Israel because of their luxurious lifestyle. “They did not know how to do right” and the woman lived in such fatness that they were described as “cows of Bashan.” Bashan is a region on the east of the River Jordan between the mountains of Gilead in the south and Mt. Hermon in the north (cf. Deut 32:14) noted for its fertile land and fine breed of cattle. Israel's wealthy women were compared to the cows of Bashan – pampered, sleek and well fed (Ps 22:12). These women selfishly pushed their husbands to oppress the helpless in order to supply their lavish lifestyles.

In Amos 6:4-6, Amos continues to attack the leaders who indulged in excessive wealth and pleasures. They built “houses of ivory” (3:15) and laid upon “beds of ivory.” They ate and drank sumptuously, anointed themselves with finest oils and idled their lives away. Since ivory was imported and very expensive, its use spoke of great extravagance even as the poor went without food.

Why did Amos condemn them for such sins? Is it wrong to live a comfortable life? Is it wrong to enjoy what we've worked so hard for? Did the Book of Ecclesiastes not permit us to enjoy our food and drink and take pleasure in our toil (Ecll 2:24; 3:13)? It is without doubt that God has given the things in life for us to enjoy. However, for the people in Amos' days, enjoyment was the primary goal in life. Their pursuit of pleasure was at the expense of their brother's suffering. The rich gained their wealth, not by hard work and frugality, but by using illegal methods to exact their toll from the poor. They used their ill-gotten wealth to indulge in careless and irresponsible living. They lived lives of drunkenness and sexual immorality, without a care for poor fellow brothers. In 1 Timothy 6:17-19 Paul instructs the rich how to live and to use their wealth.

They are to use their money to do good and to be rich in good works, giving to those in need.

b. The wicked who cheated and oppressed others (Amos 5:10-12; 8:4-7)

Although wealth had made the people prosperous, they had also become greedy and unfair. They had become cruel and indifferent to the poor and needy to the point that they oppressed and took advantage of them. Amos describes vividly the social injustices and the inhumane behavior of the wicked against their fellow people; the innocent were sold by harsh money lenders, the poor were trampled under foot by well-to-do competitors. They took bribes, deprived the poor of justice, and the greedy were so eager to acquire land that they did not hesitate to use devious ways to acquire it. Because of their evil dealings they hated those who reprovved in the gate and abhorred those who spoke the truth (5:10). Such people cannot endure sound teaching and reproof because of their sins (2 Tim 4:3-4).

c. The religious hypocrites

1. Worshiped in illegitimate places

Besides their flamboyant lifestyles, Amos also pronounced judgment upon the religious sins of the people. A century and a half earlier, King Jeroboam I had set up a place of worship at Bethel and Dan, where he erected two golden calves (1 Kgs 12:28, 29). He did this to prevent the people from going to Jerusalem, the rightful place of worship, knowing that he would have trouble maintaining their loyalty if they went to Judah to worship. The people now worshiped in the north and other places of worship such as Gilgal, rather than traveling to the temple in Jerusalem (4:4-5). But God viewed this worship as an act of rebellion. Amos sarcastically urged the people to continue their false worship, thus piling up their sins.

2. Their worship was empty

Amos 4:4-5 describes the fervency of the people in worshipping God. They sacrificed each morning, offered tithes every three days and gave thanksgiving sacrifices and freewill offerings. They celebrated their feast days, their Sabbaths and their new moons and were doing far more than was prescribed by the law. And yet, God had no pleasure in their sacrifices. God refused to smell the smoke of their burnt offerings and refused their praise (5:21-24). The reason for this was because the people went through the motions of worship but continued to lead a life of sin and wickedness. All their empty worship could not avert God's judgment.

In Amos 5:21-24, the prophet reveals to the Israelites the true meaning of worship. Religion is more than offerings and sacrifices, attending services and praising God with songs and music. True religion demands righteous living and doing what is right in the sight of God. Failing this, all other actions and efforts become superficial and meaningless. Do we see ourselves in the Israelites? Do we come to church each week to study God's words and pray loudly only to return to a life that grieves God? Knowing that such things are not fitting for a Christian to do, do we behave like the Israelites who thought that so long as they offered sacrifices and offerings, God would ignore their behavior? God abhors this kind of worship. What God wants is not our sacrifices, but our hearts and changed lives.

d. The five visions of judgment

God showed Amos a series of five visions concerning His judgment on Israel. When Amos saw the disasters that were to fall upon the Israelites, Amos interceded for them. As a result, God relented from sending the first two disasters upon Israel. But Israel persisted in her disobedience. God was to still carry out His judgment.

1. The swarm of locusts (Amos 7:1-3).

2. Fire (Amos 7:4-6).

3. The plumbline (Amos 7:7-9). A plumbline was a device used in construction to ensure the straightness of a wall. A wall that was not straight will eventually collapse. Here, the plumbline was used to measure the people against God's standard, but unfortunately they had fallen far below what God required.

4. The summer fruits (Amos 8:1ff). Summer fruits imply maturity and ripeness to the point of being almost rotten. Although the nation had a brilliantly colored exterior, inside they were rotten and full of corruption. This demonstrated how the Israelites were on the edge of being disciplined by God.

5. God standing beside the altar (Amos 9:1ff).

e. Rebuilding the fallen booth of David (9:11-15)

According to the justice of God, a sinful nation needs to be destroyed.

However, because of God's promise, a remnant will be preserved and will return to the holy city to rebuild the fallen booth of David. Not only does this prophecy speak of the restoration of Israel, but of the rebuilding of the spiritual Israel, the true church.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



There are no questions for this lesson.

LIFE APPLICATION



Are you ready?

Have students read the lyrics to this hymn:

Redemption Draweth Nigh

*Usual time have come and gone
Since I first heard it told
How Jesus would come again some day
If back then it seems so real
Then I just can't help but feel
How much closer His coming is today*

*Wars and strife from every land
And violence fills our land
Still some people doubt He'll come again
But the Word of God is true
He'll redeem His chosen few
Don't lose hope, soon Christ Jesus will descend*

*Chorus:
Signs of the times are everywhere
And there's a brand new feeling in the air
Lift your eyes upon the eastern sky
Lift up your hands redemption draweth nigh.*

The hymn speaks of the signs of the times. What are the signs of the times? (Ask students to list the events that will occur before the Lord's Second Coming. Answers can be found in Matthew 24).

a. The Natural World:

Earthquakes (Mt 24:7)

Pestilence (strange diseases caused by viruses such as SARS, aids, etc.) (Lk 21:11)

Famines (Mt 24:7)

Strange cosmic phenomena (Lk 21:11)

b. The Present World:

Iniquities and sins will increase (Mt 24:10,12; 2 Tim 3:1-6)

Knowledge increases (Dan 12:4)

Many wars and world wars (Mt 24:6, 7)

The revival of the Israelite nation (Mt 24:32)

The establishment of many countries in the world (Lk 21:30)

c. The Spiritual World:

The downpouring of the latter rain (Joel 2:28-32)

The rise of the true church (Is 2:3; Rev 6:1, 2)

The preaching of the gospel throughout the world (Mt 24:14, 27)

The appearance of false christs and false prophets (Mt 24:11, 23, 24)

The rise of the anti-Christ (Rev 6:3, 4)

Great persecution of the church (Dan 9:27; Mt 24:9)

What does the Lord's Second Coming mean to you? What are your thoughts when you see all these events happening?

Getting Prepared

We often hear about the necessity of preparing ourselves in the event of earthquakes, hurricanes or other such natural disasters. In the same way, we need to make vital preparations to meet the Lord so that we will not be swept away with the rest of the world. After the Lord explained about the signs of the end times in Matthew 24, He continued to elaborate on how we need to prepare for His coming. What are the indispensable provisions that we would need to prepare for His return?

a. Prepare a heart of watchfulness (read Mt 25:1-13)

1. What does oil represent?

2. How is taking enough oil significant to us?

3. Here are some of the ways I will prepare oil:

b. Prepare a heart to serve God faithfully (read Mt 25:14-20)

1. List some of the talents that God has given you.
2. What will you do with the talents God has given you to prepare for His coming?

c. Prepare a heart of love for others (read Mt 25:31-46)

The ways I can:

Feed the hungry and quench the thirsty _____

Take in strangers _____

Clothe the naked _____

Visit the sick _____

Go to those in prison _____

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



As we see the prophecies of the Bible being realized, let us pray the Lord will grant us a heart of wisdom to number our days and to effectively seize every moment to prepare ourselves for His return, so that each of us can welcome the Lord with a clear conscience on that glorious Day.

Lesson 5

Jonah, Hosea, Micah

Listed Scriptures

Jonah 1-3; Hos 1,6; Mic 4

Lesson Aim

- 1) To learn about God's unceasing love.
- 2) To learn that God desires all men to be saved.
- 3) Students will reflect upon their own levels of love.

Memory Verse

"He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." (Mic 6:8)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Jonah 1-3; Hos 1,6; Mic 4

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



Canaanite religion

By the time of Hosea, many of the practices of Canaanite worship were actually integrated with the worship of the Lord. The religion of Canaan was essentially a fertility faith that linked the land's fruitfulness to the supposed sexual activity of gods and goddesses. When the male lord or owner god (Baal) and his consort (Astarte, or Asherah) had sexual intercourse, the land was stimulated to produce crops. The fertility of animals and people were assumed to be linked to the sexual activity of these nature gods. As an expression of this belief, the worship of the pagan gods and goddesses at local shrines and high places was typically marked by drunkenness and orgies. Male and female prostitutes engaged in sexual activity to stimulate the gods to make the land fertile. Idolatry and sexual looseness became very much linked.