

Overview of the Minor Prophets

The Biblical Story

I. Biblical Timeline

Beginning-----2000 BC-----1500 BC-----1000 BC-----500 BC-----0 BC-----End
Adam Abraham Moses David Exile Jesus

II. The Beginning

A. Creation

1. Humanity created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27)
2. God's blessing and command: "God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and rule over it.'" (Genesis 1:28)

B. Fall

Humanity rebels against God, and the earth is filled with a distorted image of God

III. Abraham (2000 BC)

A. God chooses one man to begin his redemption of humanity

B. God's covenant with Abraham: "Leave your country and your people, and go to the land I will show you. I will make you a great nation, and you will be a blessing: I will bless all the families of the earth through you." (Genesis 12:1-3)

IV. Moses (1500 BC)

A. God rescues his chosen people from slavery in Egypt

B. God's covenant with Moses at Mt. Sinai: "If you obey my voice and keep my covenant you will be my treasured possession among all peoples, and you will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"

1. The 10 commandments + over 600 other commandments
2. God promises blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (Deut. 28)

V. David (1000 BC)

A. God brings his people into the promise land and they ask for a king

B. God's covenant with David: "I will raise up your offspring after you, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." (2 Samuel 7:12-13)

VI. Exile

A. Israel has a civil war that divides the kingdom into north (Israel) and south (Judah)

B. In 722BC the Assyrians conquer Israel and carry the people off into exile

C. In 587BC the Babylonians conquer Judah and carry the people off into exile

D. The Persians allow the scattered Israelites to return to the promise land and rebuild

E. God punishes his people (like he promised), but he never abandons them

VII. Jesus

A. God makes a new covenant through Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins

B. Jesus is the fulfillment of all God's promises in the Old Testament

Jesus is the true image (Adam), the true blessing to the nations (Abraham), the true obedience (Moses), and the true King (David)

The Minor Prophets

I. When did the prophets live?

750-450BC

Between the divided monarchy, through the exile, and the return from exile

A time of great political, military, economic upheaval

A high level of unfaithfulness to the covenant

II. What is a prophet?

A. A prophet is God's spokesman to the people: one who speaks God's words

B. Not merely a "fortune teller," but mainly a "truth teller"

Someone who can say, "thus says the Lord . . ."

They interpret the theological meaning behind historical events

III. What is the prophets' message?

A. The basic message

= "Return to your God. Stay true to the covenant God made with you at Mt. Sinai"

= "There's no refuge from judge, but there's refuge in the judge"

B. Specific Issues

Loving God (Idolatry, half-hearted worship, putting trust in other places)

Loving neighbor (social justice, caring for the needy, loving enemies)

C. Through the prophets we see the heart of God: we're hear his voice calling, pleading, punishing, disciplining, forgiving, saving, never leaving

IV. How do they deliver the message?

A. Wild, poetic imagery

B. Object lessons/performance art

They use these extreme measures because Israel had grown blind and deaf to God.

Flannery O'Connor: "to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind you draw large and startling figures"

V. What makes a good prophet?

Not a successful response from the people, but rather faithfulness to God's message

Most of the prophets were largely unsuccessful in terms of the people's response

Discussion Questions

1. What stood out most to you on Sunday as you heard the “big-picture” view of the Biblical story? How does seeing the whole story affect your view of God?
2. How would you explain the relationship between the covenants (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenant)? Are they simply continuations of the same covenant? Are they fairly distinct and unique from one another?
3. If one of the Minor Prophets (“truth-tellers” who speak God’s word) stepped into Grace Fellowship Church next Sunday what would he say positively and what would he say negatively?
4. When you hear the charge to “remember the covenant God made with you,” how does that hit you based on what you’re currently going through (is it a call to return to God from a time of wandering, is it a call to give thanks to God, is it a call to trust God in the midst of difficult circumstances, is it a call to claim his forgiveness? Etc).