

Hosea

In Hosea, Jesus is Healer of the Backslider

Hosea's name means "salvation." His life became a dramatic portrayal of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel.

- Hosea represents God
- Gomer (his wife) represents Israel
- The lovers are the foreign nations
- The children are the symbols of God's impending judgment on Israel.

Hosea's day can be compared to ours—The Assyrian enemy was a major threat (terrorism); Israel had a lack of faith (America). At least two political parties in Israel struggled for power. There were also theological issues. Israel was guilty of spiritual adultery, forsaking Yahweh and turning to the Baals.

Hosea's marriage, as instructed by God, was a real relationship lived out among his neighbors to dramatize Israel's unfaithfulness. Gomer runs after other men, while Israel runs after other gods; Gomer commits physical adultery, while Israel commits spiritual adultery. His marriage failed. He felt the pain of a husband deserted by his wife.

The prophecy of Hosea was God's last attempt to call the Israelites to repent of their persistent idolatry and wickedness, before giving them over to the full judgment of their sins. The book was written to reveal:

1. That God maintained His love for His covenant people and intensely desired to redeem them from their iniquity.
2. That tragic consequences follow when people persist in disobeying God and in rejecting His redeeming love.

The names of Hosea's children are prophetic signs to Israel:

- Jezreel—"God scatters"
- Lo-Ruhamah—"Not loved"
- Lo-Ammi—"Not my people"

Hosea's persevering love for his adulterous wife symbolizes God's steadfast love for Israel.

Major features characterize the book of Hosea:

1. Hosea is one of the only two prophets from the north with a prophetic book in the Old Testament. The other one is Jonah.
2. As with Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Hosea's personal experiences illustrated his prophetic message.
3. It contains about 150 statements concerning Israel's sins—more than half of which relate to idolatry.
4. More than any other Old Testament prophet, Hosea reminded the Israelites that the Lord had been patient and faithful in His love for them.

New Testament Fulfillment

Hosea contains several verses that the New Testament quotes as being fulfilled in Jesus Christ:

- The call of God's Son out of Egypt
(Hosea 11:1, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son."-- Matthew 2:15, "where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'")
- Christ's victory over death
(Hosea 13:14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction? I will have no compassion."—1 Cor. 15:55, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?")
- God's desire for mercy and not sacrifice
(Hosea 6:6, "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings."—Matt. 9:13, "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Matt. 12:7, "If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent.")
- The Gentiles, who were not God's people, now becoming His people.
(Hosea 1:6, 9-10, "Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, 'Call her Lo-Ruhamah, for I will no longer show love to the house of Israel, that I should at all forgive them...Then the LORD said, 'Call him Lo-Ammi, for you are not my people, and I am not your God. Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'")

Hosea 2:23, "I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved on.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people;' and they will say, 'You are my God.'"

Romans 9:25-26, "As He says in Hosea: 'I will call them "my people" who are not my people; and I will call her "my loved one" who is not my loved one,' and it will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

1 Peter 1:10, "Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care."

Joel

In Joel, Jesus is the Restorer.

Joel spoke and wrote because of two recent natural disasters—an invasion of locusts and a severe drought, the combination of which devastated the people of Judah at nearly every level of society. His purpose was three-fold:

1. To bring the people together before the Lord in a great sacred assembly (*1:14; 2:15-16*)
2. To exhort the people to repent and humbly return to the Lord God with fasting, weeping, mourning and intercession for God's mercy (*2:12-17*).
3. To record God's prophetic word to His people on the occasion of their sincere repentance (*2:18-3:21*).

Special Features:

1. It is one of the most polished literary masterpieces in the Old Testament.
2. It contains the most profound OT prophecy about the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy spirit on all humankind.
3. It records numerous national disasters—locust plagues, drought and famine, raging fires, foreign military invasions, celestial calamities—as God's judgments for spiritual and moral disintegration.
4. It emphasizes that God sometimes sovereignly works in history through such natural disasters and military invasions in order to bring about repentance, revival and redemption.
5. It models a prophetic preacher who, because of his close communion with God and his spiritual stature, is able to call God's people decisively to repent as a nation at a critical hour in their history, and to achieve positive results through that repentance.

New Testament Fulfillment

1. The prophecy about the coming of the Holy Spirit (*2:28-32*) is specifically quoted by Peter in his message at Pentecost (*Acts 2:16-21*), after the Holy Spirit had descended from heaven with power on the 120 charter members of the early church.
2. Peter's invitation to the multitudes at that Jewish feast regarding their need to call on the name of the Lord and be saved was inspired (in part) by what Joel had said.
3. The apocalyptic signs in the heavens that Joel prophesied would occur at the end of time (*2:30-31*) are not only quoted by Peter, but also referred to by Jesus and by John on Patmos.

4. Joel's prophecy about God judging the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat is further developed in the last book of the Bible.

Amos

In Amos, Jesus is the Shepherd for the Poor.

Amos was a shepherd who also took care of fig trees. He was a prophet during the days when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam II was king of Israel.

This book is primarily a prophetic cry for justice and righteousness, based on God's character. Whereas Hosea was crushed by Israel's unfaithfulness to God, Amos is outraged at Israel's violation of God's standards of justice and righteousness for his people.

It illustrates how abhorrent religion is to God when divorced from righteous conduct in daily living.

Amos was vigorously confrontational, and he possessed a strong, unbending loyalty to God and to His righteous standards for the covenant people.

The book demonstrates God's willingness and readiness to use God-fearing people without formal ministerial credentials to proclaim His message in an age of professionalism.

New Testament Fulfillment

The message of Amos is most clearly seen in Jesus' teaching and in the New Testament book of James. Jesus and James both applied Amos' message that true worship of God is not the formal observance of religious ritual, but "hearing" and "doing" God's will, demonstrated in a just and righteous treatment of one's fellow human beings.

Both Amos and James emphasize the principle that "true religion demands righteous behavior." James quoted Amos 9:11-12 at the Council of Jerusalem.

Obadiah

In Obadiah, Jesus is our Savior.

The only thing we know about Obadiah is that he was a prophet. The book does not give us its historical setting. It is the shortest book of the Old Testament (21 verses), and directly speaks to Edom and Zion—Esau and Jacob, the two sons of Isaac. We see the doom of Edom and the deliverance of Zion.

Obadiah offers some important themes:

- God's reciprocal relationship to His people: *"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse"* (Genesis 12:3) Edom's attacks against Judah brought the curse of God back upon them.

- The law of appropriate judgment. In the manner it treated, Judah, God would treat Edom.
- The universal rule of Yahweh.

Jonah

In Jonah, Jesus is our Resurrection and Life

Jonah was a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II, from a town near Nazareth in Galilee. His ministry took place shortly after Elisha's ministry (2 Kings 13:14-19), overlapped with that of Amos (Amos 1:1), and was followed by that of Hosea (Hosea 1:1). It is believed that he was one of Elisha's disciples.

This book seems to have been written for three purposes:

1. To demonstrate to Israel and the nations the magnitude and breadth of God's saving mercy and activity through the preaching of repentance;
2. To show through Jonah's experience how far Israel had fallen from its original missionary calling to be a light of redemption to those who dwell in darkness (*Genesis 12:1-3; Isaiah 42:6-7; 9:6*)
3. To remind backslidden Israel that God in love and mercy had sent her not just one prophet, but MANY faithful prophets who delivered the message of repentance so as to avert inevitable judgment for sin. Yet, unlike Ninevah, Israel had rejected God's prophets and His offer to repent and receive mercy.

This book contains the clearest Old Testament message that God's saving grace is for Gentiles as well as Jews.

Jonah is the first Jewish prophet that God sent to a pagan nation. The book reveals God's heart of compassion for the nations and the work of foreign missions.

God can use anyone! He will do impossible things and use impossible circumstances to accomplish His plan!

How did Jesus compare Himself to Jonah in Matthew 12:39-40?

Micah

In Micah, Jesus is the Witness Against Rebellious Nations

Like Amos, Micah came from the countryside, probably from a family of humble standing. While Isaiah, his contemporary in Jerusalem, addressed the king and international situations, Micah was a country prophet who condemned Judah's corrupt rulers, false prophets, ungodly priest, dishonest merchants and bribed judges. He preached against the sins of injustice, oppression of the peasants and villagers, greed, immorality and idolatry, and warned of severe consequences if the people and their leaders persisted in their evil ways.

Micah's prophetic ministry took place during the reigns of three kings of Judah: Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.

This book:

1. Champions the cause of the humble peasants who faced exploitation by the arrogant wealthy, similar to James message in the New Testament (*Micah 6:6-8 and James 1:27*).
2. Contains one of the grandest expressions in the Bible about God's mercy and forgiving grace (*7:18-20*).

Like other Old Testament prophets, Micah saw beyond God's judgment of Israel and Judah to the coming Messiah and His righteous reign on earth. 700 years before Christ's incarnation, Micah prophesied that He would be born in Bethlehem (*5:2*). Matthew 2:4-6 records that the priests and the teachers of the law quoted this verse in reply to Herod's inquiry about the Messiah's birthplace.

Micah also revealed that the Messiah would shepherd God's people justly (*Micah 5:4; John 10:1-16; Hebrews 13:20*)

Micah's frequent references to future redemption reveal that God's enduring desire and purpose for His people is salvation, not judgment. The truth is magnified in the New Testament (*John 3:16*).

Nahum

In Nahum, Jesus is our Stronghold in the day of trouble

Nahum's name means "comfort." He prophesied about Nineveh's coming judgment.

There was a two-fold purpose in this prophetic book:

1. God used him to pronounce the impending destruction of the wicked and cruel Assyrian capital of Nineveh. No nation as wicked as the Assyrians could expect to go unpunished by God.
2. At the same time, Nahum delivered a message of comfort for God's own people. The comfort is derived not from seeing the bloodshed of their enemies, but from knowing that God was upholding justice in the world, and would someday establish the kingdom of peace.

Nahum is one of the three OT prophetic books whose message is almost exclusively addressed to a foreign nation. The other two are Obadiah and Jonah.

The book contains the most graphic metaphors, vivid word pictures and blunt language found anywhere in the Bible.

The New Testament makes no direct use of this book. The only verse that may appear in the New Testament is:

Nahum 1:15, "Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, and fulfill your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed."

Nahum himself borrowed this verse from Isaiah 52:7. Paul uses the imagery of “beautiful feet” to emphasize that just as a messenger in the Old Testament was joyfully received by God’s people when bearing the good news of peace and deliverance from their enemies Assyria and Babylon, so new covenant preachers bear the good news of deliverance from sin’s bondage and Satan’s power through Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:15, “And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”

Habakkuk

In Habakkuk, Jesus is our Salvation.

Unlike his contemporary, Jeremiah, Habakkuk does not prophesy to backslidden Judah; he writes instead to help the godly remnant in Judah comprehend God’s ways with regard to their sinful nation and its approaching judgment. Having himself wrestled with the profoundly disturbing problem of God using a deplorably wicked people like the Babylonians to swallow up His people in judgment (1:6-13), Habakkuk assures fellow believers that God will deal with all wickedness at the appointed time.

In the meantime, *“the righteous will live by his faith” (2:4)* and not by his understanding, and will *“rejoice in the Lord”* in God His Savior (3:18)

Habakkuk records his personal conversations with God and subsequent prophetic revelation. His first question to the Almighty was how God could allow His rebellious people to get away with so much sin without being punished. God answered by showing the prophet that He would soon be using the Babylonians to punish the nation of Judah.

His second question followed immediately. How could God allow a nation even more wicked and cruel than Judah to punish her? God answered by assuring the prophet that a day of reckoning would also come for the Babylonians.

Throughout the entire book, Habakkuk expresses his faith in God’s sovereignty and in the certainty that God is just in all his ways.

The revelation of God’s love for the righteous and His purpose to destroy powerful and arrogant Babylon evoked a prophetic hymn of praise and promise concerning salvation and deliverance (*chapter 3*). The book concludes with Habakkuk’s personal ringing declaration that he rejoices in God, not because of what God gives, but because of WHO God is (3:17-18).

No prophet in the Old Testament is more eloquent on the issue of faith than Habakkuk—not only in his declaration that the righteous will live by his faith (2:4) but also in his personal testimony (3:17-19).

New Testament Fulfillment

Habakkuk's declaration that the righteous will live by faith is the key Old Testament text used by Paul in his theology of justification by faith. The apostle of faith quotes this verse both in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11. Hebrews 10:37-38 quote from the same passage.

Zephaniah

In Zephaniah, Jesus is a Jealous Lord.

Zephaniah's name means, "the Lord hides." He was the great, great grandson of King Hezekiah and prophesied during the reign of Josiah, Judah's last godly ruler.

The sins that Zephaniah charged against Jerusalem and Judah indicate that he prophesied before Josiah's reveal and reform, at a time when the terrible sins of Josiah's wicked predecessors (Manasseh and Amon) were still rampant in society. It was not until the 12th year of Josiah's reign that the king set out to purge the nation of idolatry and to reinstitute the true worship of the Lord. Eight years later he ordered the repair and purification of Solomon's temple, during which time a copy of the law of the Lord was discovered.

Most likely Zephaniah's prophetic preaching had a direct influence on the king, and helped to inspire his reforms.

Five major features characterize the book of Zephaniah.

1. Zephaniah is the only prophet to give an extended list of his ancestry, going back four generations to King Hezekiah.
2. It has the most extensive revelation in the Old Testament about the future "day of the Lord."
3. It demonstrates that God's people need to be confronted by His warnings as well as comforted by His promises.
4. It contains a rather well-developed teaching about the faithful remnant that would be restored in the day of the Lord's visitation.
5. Zephaniah's revelation about the coming day of God's wrath for the wicked and the great day of salvation for His people contributed to the New Testament revelation about the end of time.

New Testament Fulfillment

Jesus may have alluded to Zephaniah twice; both references associated with His second coming.

Zeph. 1:2-3, "I will sweep away everything from the face of the earth, declares the Lord. I will sweep away both men and animals; I will sweep away the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. The wicked will have only heaps of rubble when I cut off man from the face of the earth, declares the Lord."

Matt. 13:40-42, "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Zeph. 1:15, "That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness."

Matt. 24:29, "Immediately after the distress of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."

New Testament writers understood Zephaniah's message about the "day of the Lord" as a description of the eschatological events that begin with the great tribulation and conclude with Jesus' return to judge the living and the dead.

Zeph. 1:14, "The great day of the LORD is near—near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the LORD will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there."

Rev. 6:17, "For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Zeph. 3:8, "'Therefore, wait for me,' declares the LORD, 'for the day I will stand up to testify. I have decided to assemble the nations, to gather the kingdoms and to pour out my wrath on them—all my fierce anger. The whole world will be consumed by the fire of my jealous anger.'"

Rev. 16:1, "Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, 'Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth.'"

Haggai

In Haggai, Jesus is the Desire of all Nations.

Haggai is mentioned by name twice in Ezra (5:1; 6:14) and nine times in this book. He is called "the prophet," and "the Lord's messenger." He may have been one of a small handful of exiles who, upon returning to resettle Jerusalem, could remember Solomon's temple before it was destroyed by

Nebuchadnezzar's army in 586 BC. If so, Haggai would have been in his 70's or 80's at the time of this writing. The book takes place in the second year of King Darius of Persia.

In 538 BC, King Cyrus of Persia issued a decree permitting the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. This was in fulfillment of:

- Isaiah's and Jeremiah's prophecies
- Daniel's intercession

Purpose

Haggai delivered the four terse messages recorded in this book. These messages had a two-fold purpose:

1. To exhort Zerubbabel (governor) and Joshua/Jeshua (high priest) to mobilize the people to rebuild the temple.
2. To motivate the people to reorder their lives and priorities so as to resume the work in a dedicated way with God's blessing.

Four messages:

1. A rebuke for the unfinished temple
2. The promise of greater glory
3. The call to holiness with blessing
4. A prophetic promise

It was the first clear prophetic word heard in Judah after the Babylonian exile.

New Testament Fulfillment

Several verses in chapter 2 speak of the coming of the Messiah (*vv. 6-9, 21-23*). The author of Hebrews refers to the future shaking of the heavens and the earth and of nations and kingdoms (*Heb. 12:26-28*).

Haggai prophesies that Zerubbabel will be like a "signet ring" or official seal. In the two NT genealogies of Jesus, Zerubbabel is the center that ties the two branches of the Messianic line together:

- From Solomon (son of David) to Zerubbabel to Joseph
- From Nathan (son of David) to Zerubbabel to Mary

Zechariah

In Zechariah, Jesus is the Righteous Branch.

Zechariah was a priest and prophet who was a younger contemporary of Haggai.

Ezra 5:1, "Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet, a descendant of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them."

Whereas Zechariah was a young man when he prophesied alongside Haggai, he apparently was an old man when he wrote chapters 9-14. All of Zechariah's prophecy occurred in Jerusalem for the 50,000 Jewish exiles who had returned to Judah in the first stage of restoration. The New Testament indicates that Zechariah was murdered between the temple and the altar (the place of intercession) by hostile temple officials (*Matt. 23:35*).

Purpose

Zechariah's twofold purpose in writing corresponds to the two major parts of the book.

1. Chapters 1-8 were given to encourage the Jewish remnant in Judah to resume building the temple and to stick with it until the task was completed.
2. Chapters 9-14 were given to encourage the same people who, having completed the temple, were disheartened when the Messiah did not appear immediately, and to reveal what it will mean when the Messiah does come.

This book is the most Messianic of all the OT books in that its many clear references to the Messiah occur in 14 chapters. Only Isaiah (in 66 chapters) contains more prophecies about the Messiah than Zechariah.

Its visions and highly symbolic language resemble the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation.

New Testament Fulfillment

The merger of Zechariah's personal life of the priestly and the prophetic may have contributed to the NT understanding of Christ as both priest and prophet.

Zechariah prophesied about the atoning death of Jesus as the hands of the Jews, which at the end of time will cause Israel to mourn, repent and be saved. (*12:1-13:9; Romans 11:35-37*)

Zechariah's prophecies about the Messiah are confirmed in the NT through Jesus:

1. He will come in a humble and lowly fashion.
2. He will restore Israel by the blood of His covenant.
3. He will be a Shepherd to God's scattered and wandering sheep.
4. He will be betrayed and rejected.
5. He will be pierced and struck down.
6. He will return in glory to deliver Israel from its enemies.
7. He will rule as King in peace and righteousness.

8. He will establish His glorious kingdom forever over all the nations.

Malachi

In Malachi, Jesus is the Sun of Righteousness.

The name “Malachi” means, “My messenger.”

The content of the book indicates:

1. The temple had been rebuilt and the sacrifices and feasts reinstated.
2. A general knowledge of the law had been reintroduced by Ezra.
3. A subsequent backsliding had occurred among the priests and the people.

When Malachi wrote, the post-exilic Jews in Palestine were again experiencing adversity and spiritual decline. The people had become cynical, doubting God’s love and promises, questioning His justice and disbelieving there was any profit in obeying His commands. As their faith dimmed, they became mechanical and insensitive in their worship observances, indifferent to the law’s requirements and guilty of all kinds of sins against the covenant.

Malachi confronted both the priests and the people with the prophetic summons:

1. To repent of their sins and religious hypocrisy before God suddenly came in judgment.
2. To remove the obstacles of disobedience that were blocking the flow of God’s favor and blessing.
3. To return to the Lord and His covenant with sincere and obedient hearts.

New Testament Fulfillment

Three specific passages from Malachi are quoted in the New Testament.

1. The phrases “*I have loved Jacob*” and “*Esau I have hated*” (1:2-3) are quoted by Paul in his discourse on election (*Romans 9:13*).
2. Malachi’s prophecy about “*the messenger who will prepare the way before me*” (3:1; *Isa. 40:3*) is quoted by Jesus as referring to John the Baptist and his ministry (*Matt. 11:7-15*).
3. Jesus understood that Malachi’s prophecy about God sending “*the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes*” (4:5) applied to John the Baptist (*Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13*). The last book of the Bible adds that the spirit of Elijah will appear again before the second coming of Christ (*Rev. 11:3-6*).