

Thursday, August 5, 2021—Obadiah, Jeremiah 1-2

A farmer plants tomato seeds expecting to harvest tomatoes, not grapes. The sprinter trains with plans of winning the 100-meter race, not the balance-beam gold. One reaps what one sows.

Obadiah had a word for Edom, the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob, and the close relatives of the people of Israel and Judah. Edom took great pride in their fortified dwelling place and believed they were secure. God had seen how the Edomites participated in the looting of Jerusalem and celebrated the fall of His people. Their pride would be their downfall. Their homeland would belong to others. The harvest was coming.

While Obadiah wrote to Edom, Jeremiah wrote to his people. Many had died in the Babylonian captivity. Others were now captive in Babylon. Jeremiah remained in Jerusalem to weep over the remains. In the depths of destruction and despair, God reminded Jeremiah that He had called him to prophesy to His people (1:6-10). They, too, were reaping the harvest of the idolatry and wickedness they had sown (1:16). Jeremiah had a terribly difficult task, but God promised His empowering presence (1:19).

The people had walked away from God, the fountain of living water, and dug cisterns of their own trying to catch the runoff waters of false gods (2:13). They denied the God who gave them life and liberty and pledged their allegiance to stone and wood (2:27). They would now discover whether these gods could deliver them. The harvest was coming.

Worship God for being the only true God. Plant seeds of faith.

Wednesday, August 4, 2021—2 Kings 22-25

Media sources have no shortage of home-improvement shows. The desire and ability to take something older and make it more modern are enjoyable to watch. Having the skill and the funds to take something abandoned and make it livable draws millions of viewers.

For more than 50 years, evil kings led Judah. Then, Josiah became king at eight years old. He did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and in the 18th year of his reign, he called for a restoration of the Temple. This was no ordinary “flip this house” project. This was the residence of God Himself. For more than 70 years, little to no upkeep had been done.

The workers made a more convicting discovery. They found a copy of the Law, and Josiah read it. He realized how far his people had wandered from God’s standards, and he tore his clothes in lament (22:11). As a young man, Josiah heard God’s commands for the first time. He called the nation together and read them aloud to the nation (23:2) and called them to love Yahweh with all their heart and soul (23:3). He conducted a cleansing throughout the land of all those things that defiled and dishonored.

When Josiah died, the revival work died with him. His son did what was evil, and the “flipped house” quickly fell into disrepair. In less than 20 years, Nebuchadnezzar had looted the Temple and deported many.

Pray for God to renew your life and to produce fruit that lasts.

Tuesday, August 3, 2021—Habakkuk 1-3

“You ain’t seen nothin’ yet!” This statement can strike fear in those who don’t like what they’ve seen or stir excitement in those who do. Things are either about to get much better or much worse.

Habakkuk cried out to God in his misery. The nation was suffering spiritually and physically. They had wandered from God, and there were growing amounts of violence and grief. “How long will this go on?” Habakkuk asked. “You won’t believe what’s coming,” God answered (1:5).

Things were about to go from bad to worse. The Chaldeans were on the rise and would displace the Assyrians as Judah’s nemesis. Habakkuk conceded that God had chosen them as His tools for judgment, but he wondered how God could look upon such evil and allow it. Habakkuk waited for God to answer his inquiry (2:1).

God told Habakkuk those who were just would live by faith (2:4). Those in right relationship with God know God will not allow evil to stand forever. Everyone had seen evil flourish for a time, but repeatedly God had shown His glory to the whole world by bringing them down (2:14). Habakkuk humbly called on God to work again and be merciful to him (3:2). If everything around him failed, he would still be joyful in God (3:17-18).

Praise God for His faithfulness to judge evil and bless righteousness. Pray for patience when life is depressing and burdensome. Remember the great things God has done and joyful anticipate the next.

Monday, August 2, 2021—Zephaniah 1-3

After the terrible reign of Manasseh, his son Amon had a brief time as king. Then, God graciously gave Judah the boy-king, Josiah, who began his reign at eight years of age. He did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and he, like his great-grandfather Hezekiah, brought spiritual reform.

Zephaniah had the hard task of prophesying to the nation about their continued spiritual decline. Though the king was leading them toward righteousness, too many of them remained unrepentant, and the nation was bound for destruction (1:2-6). The great Day of the Lord, in which He would bring judgment, was nearer than ever (1:14), despite the fact that many had concluded God would never punish Judah (1:12).

God called His people to the daily task of every believer—seek righteousness and humility (2:3). God would not guarantee that their seeking Him would stave off His judgment, but they would be enriched and He would be glorified if His people lived in the holiness and meekness for which He designed them. God wanted to teach His people so they could trust Him and draw near to Him (3:2). They continually rejected Him.

The punishment would purify the people. Those remaining would trust in Him and live faithfully (3:12-13). In that day, they would know God was with them. He is mighty to save. He takes great delight in His people. He quiets them with His love. He rejoices over them with singing (3:17).

Praise God for His greatness. Choose to walk in holiness.

Sunday, August 1, 2021—2 Kings 20-21

God uses those who follow Him as a blessing to others. King Hezekiah reigned 29 years over the southern kingdom of Judah, and he destroyed idols and high places throughout the land (21:3). Though the nation was under pressure from Assyria, they did not fall while Hezekiah was their king. He brought spiritual and military strength to the nation, and he accomplished engineering feats that benefitted the people (20:20).

Hezekiah was not perfect. When God brought miraculous healing and provided a supernatural sign of his cleansing, Hezekiah rejoiced. He welcomed envoys from Babylon who celebrated his recovery and showed them all the treasures of Judah. He was thankful for how God had blessed him and his people, and it caused him to lack discernment about the men with whom he celebrated. Isaiah told Hezekiah the days were coming when the Babylonians would come and take all those valuables to their homeland.

Hezekiah affirmed Isaiah's words and was grateful he himself would not see that day. At least the peace and stability God provided would last through his lifetime. When he died, that peace quickly evaporated as Manasseh reinstated the idolatry Hezekiah had banished. He sacrificed children and worshiped evil spirits (21:6). His son Amon continued the practice. The nation may not have been at war, but their wandering from God ensured there was no true peace.

Without God's grace, life has no hope. Without His gifts, life has no purpose. Thank God for the gift of life and the call He has given. Pray to be a blessing to others and to turn their eyes to Jesus.

Saturday, July 31, 2021—Nahum 1-3

In some neighborhoods, every parent takes responsibility for every child. Even if they are not related by blood, they are connected by love, and the adults don't hesitate to discipline a misbehaving child or to call someone else's offspring to accountability. They know what is right, and they want everyone to live accordingly.

God had chosen Israel as His treasured possession, so He had expectations for them that He had for no one else. He also had blessings for them no one else could claim. God was sovereign, however, over all the earth. His prophets had spoken words of judgment over Samaria and Judah because of their covenant, but Nahum spoke judgment toward Nineveh. Even though they were not God's chosen, they were still to live rightly.

Nahum made clear Nineveh had sinned. God used them as His instrument of judgment, but they were sinful people, worthy of shame (3:5). God is more powerful than any great nation and does not leave the guilty unpunished (1:3), so they would certainly face His judgment (3:7-19). God's people would again be able to be free and to worship (1:15).

God's people needed the reminder that He was aware of their difficulty. God's people also needed the assurance that God does not allow injustice to go on forever. They would recover, but they also needed to assess themselves continually and to walk in holiness. What good would deliverance be if they were as guilty of sin as their oppressors?

Praise God for destroying sin and enriching His holy people.

Friday, July 30, 2021—Micah 5-7

A drive through the Rocky Mountains is a breathtaking experience. The majestic, snow-capped peaks. The steep drop offs. The winding roads. They all produce a sense of wonder. The drive can be a bit disorienting as well. From a distance, some of the mountains seem adjacent, but on closer inspection, the viewer realizes they are miles apart.

Micah was giving a view of the future to his people that was breathtaking. In the near future, they were going to face the judgment of God at the hand of the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Also in the future, God was going to send a savior from the tiny town of Bethlehem Ephrathah (5:2) who would bring the people peace (5:5).

That mountaintop experience was on a mountain in the distant future. Before that, they would go through the valley of judgment (6:13-16). Their failure to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly (6:8) made them wicked, violent, and unjust. God was going to give them over to their sin, but that valley would give way to the day when God Himself would plead the case of His people (7:9). The enemies who mocked God and His people will experience the judgment of God and be filled with shame (7:10).

Micah was amazed at this truth (7:18-19). Who is a God like Yahweh who does not stay angry forever? What God delights in showing compassion and casting His people's sins into the depths of the sea? Praise God for being just, faithful, patient, and victorious.