

PTB2-16a: *The Message of the Writing Prophets.*

A short form of volume 5 of the LEARN CHRIST commentaries is given here with a summary of "The Message of the Writing Prophets". That is primarily David with the four major Prophets and the 12 minor Prophets, so called because of the size not because of the relative importance of the messages. What we will indeed find in that volume and in this summary, especially in the Prophets themselves, is a repeating and singular message that is sort of a foreground for other messages like the "crucifixion and resurrection of the Christ", the Gospel, and so on; and that "the message" always entails a disaster judgment on God's people. However, also in every case, it first comes inevitable because God's people are not acting like God's people. We will use the background provided by the last chapter and by the Prophet Isaiah to present that "the message". After all, that is a good starting place both for the Writing Prophets and for the many explanations in his 14 letters where the Apostle Paul quoted from these Writing Prophets, and Isaiah is and has always been considered the foremost of the Prophets. Even if a Bible scholar, you will be surprised to find that one of the most thorough descriptions of the shaking of heaven and earth that Paul refers to in Hebrews 12 is given in Isaiah.

The Message of the Writing Prophets as used in volume 5 and as summarized here is the non-predictive part of the message of the OT Prophets, that part which was primarily a message for God's people of their own time; however it is the same message that needs to be heard in this day and time. While a better way than the law is given for righteousness, the clarity of the cross and the provision of the new birth; God's people need to hear the same The Message of the Prophets today that came years ago. Even if it were for no other reason than the 16 Writing Prophets and David are part of the Word of God, it would be necessary to listen; but in this day of the Falling Away, not from churches as in many cases attendance is going up, but rather a falling away from God, Christ, and the Bible. A Falling Away that is not a classical criticism of the youth since if the second falling away of this generation is like the first falling away of God's people in the wilderness, all youth 19 years of age and younger are safe. It is the Falling Away that Paul makes so clear in II Thessalonians as coming before the Second Coming of Christ; the falling away that Jesus described near the end times as "because sin will abound, the love of many will wax cold, and it is what Paul warned about in his thorough treatment of the Falling Away in the book of Hebrews, where he wrote to God's people, "take heed brethren, lest their be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

Here is a very short form of that The Message from all the Prophets: "God's people are not acting like God's people; and they are going to pay for it in disasters, and while the primary disaster will be eternity without God and all that is good, second to that is the blindness that will again come over God's people as it did Israel, an inability to see real spiritual reality which the Prophets called a spirit of slumber, and third to that is natural disasters which must inevitable increase as the groaning of all creation continues and magnifies to the final shaking of both heaven and earth. In other words, according to the Word of God that came

through the Prophets natural disasters as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods or all other natural forms of "fire, blood, and vapor of smoke before that great and notable Day of the LORD" are also ways in which God's people will pay for not acting like God's people. The form of that disaster or disasters which will come upon God's people, depends on the specific message of the Prophet."

Granted that you do have a lot of itching ears, would-be contemporary "prophets" like John Haggai who would lead you to believe if you consider yourself to be a member of the church, the body of Christ, that because of your desire which like your other desires as a church member lead you to turn from sound doctrine, that ignore the sound doctrine of the Falling Away which must precede the Second Coming and would have you believe that you will be caught up in the air before the Falling Away and the final tribulation. Not so! How wrong and out of Bible context and enamored with the Scofield Reference Bible notes are those who think that the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from earth is nothing less than a historical event of the Falling Away. {Some like to claim the only withdrawal of the Holy Spirit as given in II Thessalonians is simply a matter of the Spirit inside of believers. Wow, what a perversion of the simplicity of the Bible; and another case on eschatology of taking a verse and going everywhere preaching. I am often reminded when hearing such weird sounding doctrine of the statement "just let the Bible say what It wants to say". It takes more than a wind bag with all the answers, a deep voice, and the confidence that comes from popularity for itching ears Bible teachers to subvert such clear and obvious teachings that go all the way back to Daniel of how "when the power of the holy people is completely shattered" then the other last events start taking place, that shattering requires both the Falling Away of God's people and the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit which in turn releases Satan from bondage and leads to the world revelation of the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition. God's history, or workings in history change; and we just can not expect the world to be the same before and after the Fullness of the Gentiles is complete, before and after the Falling Away has started, before and after the impending signs in the skies above and the earth beneath escalate, before and after the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit and the release from bondage of Satan, before and after the world sees the Man of Sin. It is amazing how history under the direction of God repeats itself; and that is one reason why many people like to call the messages of the OT Prophets as having double and triple meanings, while it is really the full spectrum of the sweeps of God of repeating history. God's people, chosen as a group by God, did not act like God's people, except for a few of them like Caleb, Joshua, and Moses, in the 40 years in the wilderness, in the period of the judges except for occasional revival as the spirit came on a judge like Samson, in the United Kingdom which steadily deteriorated from the kingdom of Saul, David, and Samson, and the ups and downs on righteous and evil kings of the Divided Kingdoms, likewise of the people, and then of the rejection by the majority of the people called God's people during the time of Jesus, that is the nation of Israel. Likewise the Gentiles lead by the United States will again as God's people repeat the history of the Falling Away. This can be recognized as a trend by the Prophets and also the Apostle Paul, although it was also given to them as a divine revelation as part of the Word of God, that the "Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times, some will depart from the faith"; and then II Timothy is a more detailed description of the Falling Away as church members have a form of godliness that denies the power of God, as church members become

intolerant toward sound doctrine, as church members heap out Bible teachers without itching ears and heap up and in Bible teachers with itching ears, as church members are motivated more by their own desires of comfort, security, and status than they are to hear the sound Word of God, as they turn away from the truth, and as God subsequently turns them into fables, where eternal realities no longer seem real and imaginations and superficialities seem more real. {The mechanics of how this specifically happens for individuals although the security of the believer is unquestionable, sound doctrine of the Bible is given in the previous commentaries of "Snatching, Stumbling, and the Falling Away" and "What the Churches Don't Want You to Hear" as well as the shorter version of this latter commentary on Mark, "A Cup of Water". A clue is given to you to listen to the lack of sound doctrine in the teaching and preaching of an instantaneous new birth which denies the similarity of the first and physical birth which requires 9 months.}

4-1: Isaiah Summarizes the History of Israel by Witness and Prediction.

Also you will find that Isaiah is easily divided into three parts, Isaiah 1-39 where that Prophet describes Israel and Judah during his short lifetime of only 38 years and from 739 - 701 B.C., Isaiah 40-55 describes the history of Israel {I am using it in the sense of the northern and southern kingdoms} BY PREDICTION from 605 - 539 B.C., and Isaiah 56-66 predicting the events and disasters of the period of from 539 - 400 B.C. The actual Biblical history and spiritual welfare of God's people of this last period of the OT comes to us in the books of Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi, the three Prophets of which will form part of this chapter outline, immediately after Isaiah 56-66. {Likewise the preceding Writing Prophets--Jonah, Amos, and Hosea as a grouping will precede the Isaiah 1-39 division of 739 -701 like they preceded the life and writings of the Prophet Isaiah; the 40-55 division of the predictive Isaiah of 700 to 604, 605 to 539 will be followed by the chronicles of the history and the messages of the time--Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah; and so on.}

We now know that Bishop Usher in his dating scheme was a little off, especially on the exact date of the birth of Jesus, however it is still a good approximation. Approximately 1500 B.C. the children of Israel were in and rescued from Egyptian bondage to start their 40 years of wilderness wanderings; approximately 1420 B.C. under the leadership of Joshua God's people came into the promised land of Canaan; approximately 1095 after years under the judges and priests the people chose their first king, Saul, of the kingship of David from approximately 1048 to 1018 and then Solomon {Solomon reigned 40 years, I Kings 11:42} and then in approximately 975 the divided kingdom with Judah on the south and Israel on the north, so that when in 739 we come to the history of Isaiah, we are still in the divided kingdoms and facing captivities from Assyrian and Babylon. As general mental guidelines, we can summarize the history of God's group people, the nation of Israel, as truly beginning with the people in the land of Canaan approximately 1420, then (1) 125 years under judges and priests before a king; (2) 120 years under kings and the United Kingdom; (3) a passage of united kingdom history of approximately 236 years before Isaiah started writing the current history of the kingdoms. And for further perspective if you would consider the Pre-Isaiah history of Israel as before 739, starting with into the land of Canaan that would be in the ballpark of 700 years, and post-Isaiah period as another 700 years; so that what you

might call the official existence of Israel as a nation and a divided nation is centered around Isaiah. And after in Isaiah 1-39, as presented above, Isaiah records the history in Israel of his own times, then first in 40-55 Isaiah predicts accurately the history for the another 66 years {from 605 - 539} and beyond that to still another 139 years {539 - 400 B. C.} bringing up to the end of Malachi and the beginning of the 400 year before Christ intrabiblical period. Of course the ability of the Prophet Isaiah to accurately predict the subsequent history of Israel, with correspondingly accurate predictions on the life and death of the Christ, has caused many, especially those of historical criticism, to doubt Isaiah until a complete copy was found in the Dead Sea scrolls dated far before the life and death of Jesus. However, what we should really say is that God predicted history through Isaiah; for what you find often in Isaiah is "thus saith the LORD", or words like "God said" or the LORD spoke. We must think of the words of Isaiah on this subject.

"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:10,11)

{Oh to be among the remnant of God's people of any time, the sowers who receive seed and the eaters who receive the bread of life, those who beyond living by bread alone live by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God. Those people of God of Israel for the most part were blind, completely cutoff from the knowledge and salvation of God a few years after they cutoff the Messiah. Yet Paul in answer to his own question in Romans of "what profit is it then to be a Jew?" Answers because to them were given the Oracles of God. Israel became custodians of the Word of God, written by a few believing Apostles and Prophets, in spite of the majority opinion which rejected faith in God and Christ.}

4-2: Pre-Isaiah Prophets.

Amos, and Hosea predate Isaiah. Once again if we approximate with Ussher, then Hosea wrote 785 and Amos 787. **{Obadiah and Jonah will not be discussed now as they deal with the sins of other than God's people.}** Most of this can be verified by the historical books such as I Kings and the habit of the Prophets of dating their books in reference as to who were the kings. **{For Amos in verse 1:1 speaks of writing concerning all of Israel when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam was king of Israel, two years before the great earthquake.}** However dates are very secondary to us as compared to the message of the prophets, and what we are after is to briefly find the specifics in each Prophet of the Message of the time for God's people. Exegesis here is just like good Bible expositor's will demand of the book of Revelation that primarily the message had to be first of all a message to the people to whom it was written. That The Message will be the same "The Message" for us! And we will turn to the New International Commentaries for help in outlining, which have remained up-to-date and conservative while scholarly, as compared to most commentators like most Bible teachers have gone astray, missing the ASPI and carried away with historical criticism; also to the outlines of the Writing Prophets in the DISCIPLES STUDY BIBLE.

1. Part of an Outline of Amos on The Message.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, the whole book of Amos deals with The Message, primarily the first half which we will quickly look at in the outline of the study Bible mentioned above. It outlines Amos 1:1 through 6:14 as "God confronts the sin of His people." **{First, we should mention that this study Bible finds as the gift of Amos, "God's Call to Practical Righteousness", and isn't that the equivalent of saying that "God's people are not acting like God's people"?)}**

(1). God's Word is revealed in human words, 1:1-2 and following.

"The LORD roars {you know immediate that God is unhappy with His own people} from Zion, and utters His voice from Jerusalem (1:2)...Thus says the LORD (1:3)...Thus says the LORD (1:6)...Thus says the LORD (1:9)..." and so on through Amos so that you get the idea that Amos like other books of the Bible claim to be the very word of God. Here is the phenomenon of a book of 66 books in the world, a piece of historical evidence, which claims to be the very Word of God; and on which there is no middle ground, since it claims to be the Word of God, you must accept it for what it is or as a fraud of false claims that can not be trusted, and I make this latter statement rhetorically to show the foolhardiness of the alternative argument to accepting the Bible as the Word of God. Just like on Jesus of Nazareth who claimed to be the very Son of God, the claim itself leaves no middle ground between complete acceptance and complete rejection. Unfortunately, most of God's chosen group people rejected both claims to the Word and to the Son of God.

(2). The specific four sins of God's people in Judah and Israel are enumerated with a little of their history to justify the impending judgment, 2:4-15.

"For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because {one} they have despised the law of the LORD, {two} and have not kept His commandments. {three} Their lies lead them astray, {four} Lies which their fathers followed. But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem." (Amos 2:4,5)

Here the impending disaster that God will send on His own people is "fire" on Judah and on Jerusalem. Is this literal fire or destruction represented by fire? I think you can answer that immediately as the literal fire of an earthquake, since Amos according to the introduction and for a reason mentioned the great earthquake that would come in two years. The part that people have trouble accepting today is that God the Father would send an earthquake on His own people, but it is true; and we deserve far more than that, as for example the first total destruction of the earth by God in the flood and the final destruction, which by the way is also by fire. The above is for the southern kingdom of Judah, how about for the northern kingdom of Israel?

"For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, {one} Because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals {taking advantage of the poor in the land by the rich is as always in the Prophets and in the US a sin against God}. {Two} They pant after the dust of the earth which is on

the head of the poor {they covet their land and houses}, and pervert the way of the humble {they actually mislead the humble in order to achieve personal gain}. {Three} A man and his father go into the same girl, to defile My holy name {adultery is always twofold in the Bible, adultery toward God and adultery and fornication toward a fellow human being}. {Four} They lied down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge {the poor borrow against their clothing, and the rich confiscate and enjoy it}, and drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god {a constant habit of God's people of injustice in the courts while the rich judges and their friends have the gall to drink the very wine of the condemned in the house of God itself--they go to church to celebrate and rejoicing in their prosperity from God when the prosperity has come through injustice and perversion of the poor, and does that remind you of Enron and other executives, all active church members, who fleeced their own poorer employees of their 401k's in order to line their own pockets?} (Amos 2:6-8)

The impending punishment for God's people in Israel not acting like God's people is given in Amos 3:11 as (one) an "adversary shall be all around you", (two) the adversary will sap all of Israel's strength, and (three) the palaces will be plundered. This was predicted in 787 B.C. and we know it happened approximately 65 years later in 722 B.C. with the Assyrian Captivity of the northern kingdom. As background for this punishment, a little history of the blessings of God is given in Amos 2:9-12 with the disappointing response of God's people: (one) God destroyed the mighty Emirates who were in the land of Canaan before them in order to make room for His people; (two) God brought His people before that out of the land of Egypt and led them for 40 years in the wilderness; (three) God raised up in the land some of their sons to be Prophets and some to be Nazirites; (four) but God's people perversely influence the Nazirites with wine and (five) commanded the Prophets not to speak.

(3). God condemns empty religion, 3:1-15.

Even as Paul condemns a "form of godliness without the power of God" in II Timothy, so also the Prophet Amos, but really God through Amos, condemns a similar "empty religion" in Amos 3:1-15.

"For they do not know to do right, says the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces." (Amos 3:10)

It is bad enough for God's people, today and then, to not do right by fellow citizens and the strangers in the land; but to be so blind as to not "know" how to do right is the greater sin!

(4). God's love confronts His disobedient people in judgment, 4:1-5:3.

"Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, 'Bring wine, let us drink!' The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness: Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will take you away with fishhooks, and your posterity with fishhooks...." (Amos 4:1-2)

"The virgin of Israel has fallen; she will rise no more. She lies forsaken on her land; there is no one to raise her up...The city that goes out by a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which goes out by a hundred shall have ten left of the house of Israel." (Amos 5:2-3)

(5). Examples of mistreatment of the people by God's people and yet a ray of hope for a remnant after Captivity, 5:4-27.

"Therefore, because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine from them for I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sin: afflicting the just and taking bribes; diverting the poor from justice at the gate....Seek good and not evil, that you may live....it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph." (Amos 5:11-15) 2. Part of an Outline of Hosea on The Message.

The part of the study Bible outline pertinent to the message is the outline of Hosea 4:1-9:9 and entitled "unfaithfulness is the basis of God's controversy with His people" with the 13 divisions of (1) unfaithful people break covenant commitments, (2) unfaithful ministers bring judgment on the people and on themselves, (3) an alien spirit dominates unfaithful people, (4) God chastises His unfaithful people, (5) surface repentance does not satisfy the sovereign God, (6) sharp judgment comes upon fleeting loyalty, (7) loyal love and personal knowledge of God meet His requirements, (8) covenant-breaking hinders restoration of God's people, (9) making leaders by power politics shuts God out of the process, (10) compromise leads to loss of strength and alienation from God, (11) diplomatic duplicity interferes with God's redemptive activity, (12) religious perversion ends in apostasy and bondage, and (13) God's unfaithful people reap more than they sow. Now we only have time and space to look at the subheadings under the outline of (4). Under (4), "God chastises His unfaithful people", God through Hosea lists (one) God disciplines unfaithful leaders in 5:1,2; (two) God disciplines because He knows His people fully in 5:3; (three) Pride prevents repentance and promotes stumbling in 5:4,5; (four) extravagant giving is no substitute for lapses in living in 5:6-7, and (five) God is the agent of punishment for His people in 5:8-14.

(4). God chastises His unfaithful people, Hosea 5.

One, God disciplines the unfaithful leaders, 5:1,2. **"Hear this, O priests! Take heed, O house of Israel! Give ear, O house of the king! For yours is the judgment..." (Hosea 5:1)** Two, God disciplines because He knows His people, 5:3.

"And Israel is not hidden from Me...Israel is defiled." (Hosea 5:3)

Three, the people of God has misdirected their deeds and have the wrong spirit, 5:4,5.

"They do not direct their deeds toward turning to their God, for the spirit of harlotry is in their midst, and they do not know the LORD." (Hosea 5:4) Four, Extravagant giving is no substitute for lapses in living, 5:6-7.

"With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the LORD, but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn Himself from them. They have dealt treacherously with the LORD..." (Hosea 5:6,7)

Five, God is the agent of punishment for His people, 5:8-14. And can you buy that, that God Himself is the mover and maker of disaster for His own people?

"I, even I, will tear them and go away; I will take them away, and no one shall rescue." (Hosea 5:14b)