

Foundations Devotional

• FOR THE WEEK OF DEC 27 - JAN 2 •

MONDAY // JONAH 1-2

This week we shift to a section of the Old Testament that includes short books by God's prophets. Jonah was one of these. God called the prophet Jonah to proclaim His message of judgment on Nineveh. However, Jonah chose instead to board a ship going in the opposite direction. Because he fled, the Lord sent a storm that brought Jonah face-to-face with his sin and a large fish. From inside the fish, Jonah agreed to be His prophet. One of the themes of the book is God's salvation. First the sailors were physically saved when God stopped the storm, then in chapter 2, Jonah was physically saved by God. This set the stage for spiritual salvation through repentance that was at the heart of Jonah's message to the Ninevites. God offers all people spiritual salvation through the work of Jesus who died on the cross to save us from our sins. Once we accept God's offer of salvation, we are to share the gospel with others.

TUESDAY // JONAH 3-4

After the fish spit Jonah out alive, God repeated His command for the prophet to go to Nineveh and deliver a message to its people. This time Jonah did not hesitate. He warned the Ninevites of God's judgment against their sins, and the people responded by believing in God and repenting. Even the king repented and ordered the people to fast, pray, and change their sinful ways. However, Jonah's heart for the Ninevites had not changed, and he was furious that God saved this nation. While Jonah waited to see what God would do with the people, God used a shade plant to teach His prophet an important lesson about divine compassion. Jonah's story reminds us how important it is that we have hearts aligned with God's. God has made us His ambassadors to a dying world, which means we have to open our eyes to the countless people around us who desperately need the grace of God. As we mimic God's compassion, He will increase our heart for the lost and draw us closer to Himself.

WEDNESDAY // HOSEA 1-3

Hosea was another of God's Old Testament prophets who was given a challenging task in order to communicate God's judgment and mercy to the people of Israel. To paint an incredibly symbolic picture, God commanded Hosea to marry a prostitute named Gomer as a representation of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. Hosea did as God told him, and the couple had three children who were each given a name that expressed a divine judgment against Israel. Besides judgement for sin, God also promised restoration—an important reminder of His faithfulness to His people despite their unfaithfulness to Him. Through Hosea, God promised that He would not give up on His people. Just as Hosea continually pursued Gomer through her unfaithfulness, God does the same for His people even today. God does more than pursue us, though; He redeems us with His love. As a symbol of God's redemptive love for Israel, He ordered Hosea to redeem and restore Gomer. Hosea's redemption of Gomer foreshadowed Jesus' redemption of us. On the cross, Jesus our Bridegroom made a way for us to experience forgiveness and redemption of our sins.

THURSDAY // AMOS 1:1; 9

Each of God's Old Testament prophets had a specific purpose and focus for their ministry, and for Amos, that calling centered on the rampant idolatry and injustice in the Israelite community. From Amos 1:1, we learn that Amos was not a prophet by trade—he was a sheep breeder. Regardless, God used Amos to point out how far God's people had strayed from Him. Chapter 9 includes God's message of judgment against the people for their sins, but it also includes His message of hope. God, in His justice, had to punish the people for their sins, but He also promised that after the time of judgment, He would restore and repair the broken nation out of faithfulness to His covenant promises. God promised that "David's fallen booth" (9:11) would be restored—a promise that was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, who descended from David's earthly line and brought about the justice and redemption the people needed desperately. Today we too place our hope in Christ for restoration and redemption. Through Christ, God calls us to repentance, just as He did the Israelites. He also calls us to stand up for the injustices in our world as Amos did.

FRIDAY // JOEL 1-3

Although each of God's prophets had a unique calling, one common theme runs throughout all of these Old Testament books: God judges sin and calls His people to repentance. This surfaces again in the Book of Joel. A severe locust plague overtook Judah, an event Joel understood to be a sign of God's judgment against the people for their lack of concern and conviction over sin. One of the problems the people faced was their assumption that because they were descendants of Abraham, they would be safe from God's judgment, regardless of their behavior. But God, who is both righteous and just, could not ignore their sin, so out of compassion for His people He sent the plague as well as the prophecy of a coming invasion to draw them back to Himself. Again we see God's mercy on display when He promised to restore anyone who repented. God also promised His Holy Spirit who would serve as a sign of His mercy and relationship with them. The apostle Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32 during his Pentecost sermon to assure the people that God was faithful to fulfill the promise He had made (Acts 2:16-21). The Book of Joel reminds us of God's power and justice, two of His perfect attributes that are constantly at work in our lives. When we reflect on these traits, we are reminded of the grace God has shown us, and we should be brought to awe that He has chosen us to be His beloved children.

WEEKEND // FINISH UP ANY YOU DIDN'T DO