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## LIFE-STUDY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS MESSAGE THIRTEEN

ON JOEL(7)

### THE HISTORY OF GOD IN MAN

The Bible is a wonderful book. Because the Bible is wonderful, it is mysterious. Although a great many people have read and continue to read the Bible, few know what the Bible talks about. The Bible has much to say about God, Christ, Israel, and many other things, but what does the Bible actually talk about? If we would answer this question, we need to study the Minor Prophets.

#### THE MINOR PROPHETS— A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

The Minor Prophets are a key to understanding the Bible. In our study of the Minor Prophets, we have emphasized four points: God's chastisement of Israel, God's punishment upon the nations, the manifestation of Christ, and the restoration of all things. Through God's chastisement of Israel and His punishment upon the nations, the manifestation of Christ is brought forth, and the manifestation of Christ will bring in the restoration. This restoration will include not only Israel but the whole human race, the earth, and the entire universe. The new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem will be the eternal restoration of all things. These four matters are revealed in the Bible, in particular in the Minor Prophets.

#### THE BIBLE BEING THE HISTORY OF GOD IN TWO PORTIONS

The Bible may be considered the history of God. If we human beings have a history, not only as a race but even as individuals, then surely the unique, universal, and wonderful person of God must also have a history. Where do we find the history of God? God's history, the divine history, is recorded in the Bible.

God's history is of two portions—the history of God *with* man, found in the Old Testament, and the history of God *in* man, found in the New Testament. In the Old Testament God's history was a history with man. In the New Testament God's history is a history in man, for this history involves God's being one with man. Therefore, the history of God in the New Testament is a divine history in humanity.

#### The History of God with Man

God created man according to Himself, that is, in His image and according to His likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). We may say that the man created in God's image was a "photograph" of God. As a photograph of a person shows us something concerning that person himself to a certain degree, so the man created by God as a photograph of God can show forth God only to a limited extent. After God created man, He was with man, but He was still outside of man. Hence, in the Old Testament we see God not in man or one with man but simply with man. In Genesis, Exodus, the Psalms, and the entire Old Testament, God was with man but not yet in man and not yet one with man.

The Old Testament does not speak mainly concerning man; rather, it speaks mainly concerning God. God has the primary role, and man has the subordinate role. The history in the Old Testament, therefore, is God's history, God's history with man.

#### The History of God in Man

God's history in the New Testament is very different. Beginning with the first chapter of Matthew and continuing to the last chapter of Revelation, we have God coming into man and being one with man. The New Testament reveals that God is now in man and one with man. Thus, God's history in the New Testament is the history of God in man.

#### The Incarnation Accomplishing Two Things

##### Bringing God into Man

Regarding the history of God in man, the incarnation of Christ accomplished two things. First, the incarnation brought God into man. Before the incarnation, as the Old Testament reveals, God was merely with man; He was outside of man. But by incarnation God entered into man, and from that time onward the history of God was different. Whereas in the past God was with man, and His history was a history with man, now God was in man, and His history began to be a history in man.

##### Making God One with Man

Second, the incarnation made God one with man. As a result of the incarnation, there was a wonderful person—a person who is the mingling of God with man. This person, Jesus, is not only God, and He is not merely a man. He is the complete God and the perfect man. Further, He is not only God in man—He is God mingled with man.

From this we see that the incarnation was an unprecedented event. Prior to the incarnation, there was not such a person, a person who is both God and man. But now, as a result of the incarnation, there is a wonderful person who is the mingling of God with man.

**Our Involvement with the God-man**

As believers, we all have become involved with this wonderful person, this One who is both God and man. A verse which speaks of this involvement is Revelation 22:17a, which says, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come!” The Spirit is the consummated Triune God, and the bride is the transformed tripartite man. As this verse reveals, these two, the Spirit and the bride, will be married, joined to become one entity, one corporate person. This is a strong indication that, in the New Testament, God is in man and is one with man. The New Jerusalem is a marvelous sign demonstrating how God is in man and is one with man.

**MAN NOT TAKING GOD’S WAY**

The history of God with man and of God in man is not a simple matter. God was with man with the intention of coming into man and being one with man. Man was created by God for this purpose. But although God had such a purpose in creating man, man has another, subtle, purpose, and these two purposes do not agree. God has His way, and man has his way. Because of this, even when man cooperates with God, he does this not by God’s way but by his own way. Thus, there are two lines—God’s line and man’s line. God wants to come into man and to be one with man. Man, however, does not take God’s way but insists on his own way. This insistence has caused, and continues to cause, great failure. As a result, in the sight of God man has become sinful, corrupt, and abominable.

**GOD COMING IN TO CHASTISE HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE AND TO PUNISH THE NATIONS**

Because man, including Israel, has taken his own way and has become sinful and corrupt, God comes in to chastise Israel, His chosen people, and to punish the nations. When God chastises His people Israel, He has no intention of utterly destroying them. On the one hand, God chastises Israel; on the other hand, He has promised not to destroy them completely.

In order to chastise Israel God needs a “rod,” a means of discipline, and this rod is the nations. In Joel 1:4 the nations are likened to locusts in four stages: the cutting locust (the Babylonian Empire), the swarming locust (the Medo-Persian Empire), the licking locust (the Macedonian-Grecian Empire), and the consuming locust (the Roman Empire). Of these four kinds of locusts—Babylonian,

Persian, Greek, and Roman—the Roman locusts are still with us today. Although God allows the locusts to cut, swarm, lick, and consume, He does not permit them to destroy His people utterly. Whenever the locusts have gone too far, acting without regard for justice, God has come in to punish them. Whereas God uses the nations to chastise Israel, He also punishes the nations for going too far.

**GOD’S CHASTISEMENT OF ISRAEL AND HIS PUNISHMENT OF THE NATIONS AFFORDING A WAY FOR CHRIST TO BE MANIFESTED FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE FALLEN UNIVERSE**

God’s chastisement of Israel and His punishment of the nations affords a way for Christ to be manifested. Thus, the Minor Prophets speak not only of the chastisement of Israel and the punishment of the nations but also of the issue of this chastisement and punishment—the manifestation of Christ.

*Burdens for Church Prayers*

- Pray for the English-speaking testimony and gospel preaching on West Valley College campus.
- Pray for the burden of raising up next generation for building up of the body of Christ.
- Pray for YP that they will be companions with one another to pursue the Lord together.
- For GOW training: Vital groups be raised up, attending prayer meeting, prophesying on Lord’s day by daily enjoying His word and pursue the truth.

*Announcement*

- Morning Revival: 2012 Summer Training Msg #4.
- Bible Reading Schedule, Daniel: M.1:1-21. T.2:1-49, W.3:1-30, Th.4:1-37, F.5:1- 31, S. 6 : 1-28.
- Tuesday (10/9) prayer meeting at Brother Liu’s house, 14020 Shadow Oaks Way, Saratoga
- Thanksgiving conference Oklahoma City, Oklahoma from Thursday, November 22 through Lord’s Day, November 25
- 2012 Winter Training, 12/24-29, Anaheim, registration deadline: 11/1
- Fall YP retreat at Redwood Alliance 11/9-11, registration fee: \$105, registration deadline: 10/28. The video training schedule is as follows:

Message	Date	Notes
#5 and #6	10/13/2012	Combine, open to all
#7 and #8	10/27/2012	Combine, open to all
#9 and #10	11/10/2012	Combine
#11 and #12	11/24/2012	Combine