



HILL COUNTRY
BIBLE CHURCH | AUSTIN

THE BIG PICTURE



CURRENT SERIES

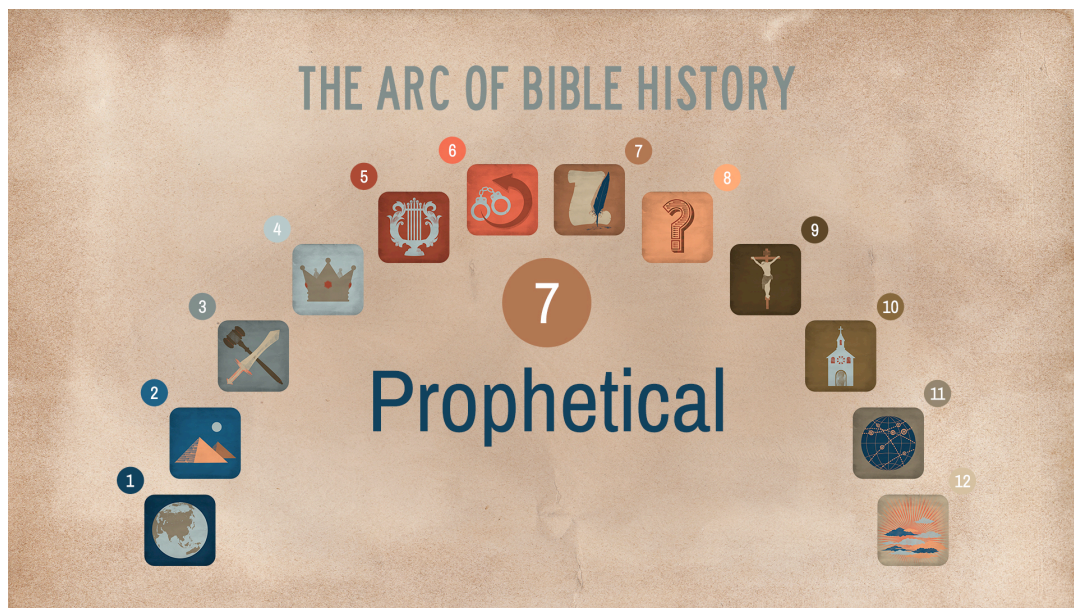


Prophetical

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May 26, 2013

Well many said it couldn't be done, but we're doing it. Going through the whole Bible from cover to cover in 13 weeks, and we are finishing the Old Testament today. So we're going to wrap up the Old Testament, but before we do I want to



give you an overview and remind you of where we've been as we look at the Arc of Biblical History. We started in The Beginning. Remember in The Beginning God creates Adam and Adam is designed in his image to follow his plan, but Adam doesn't do that. And so Adam sins, plunges the human race into sin, God picks Abraham and calls Abraham to be the father of a nation through which God will bring his blessings to all the earth. And so the Jewish people then are born. We saw in the Exodus that God delivers his people from Egypt and gives them the Old Testament law, and then after that in the Conquest God then moved his people into the land of Canaan and so now the people have the presence of God, they have the power of God with them, they've got the law of God so they know the moral law, and they've got the land of promise. What more could they want. And still they chased after the idols of the nations around them, so God raised up various judges who came along. And as long as

the judge was present the people followed, but as soon as the judge was gone the people went back to their old ways and judgment came. And so finally the people asked for a king. God give us a king, and so God gave them the king. And so we go into the period of the kings. The first three kings, well known, Saul a bad king, David a great king, Solomon a mediocre king, but because Solomon reintroduced pagan worship back to the people, once Solomon died the kingdom was divided. The ten tribes of the north were called Israel. The two tribes of the south were called Judah. Israel has 20 kings, all bad. They introduced idol worship at a very high level. The empire lasted for about 200, a little over 200 years. They are carried into captivity into Assyria and then they disappear forever – just scattered all over the world.

The nation of Judah has 20 kings and 8 of them are good and 12 of them are bad. They last about 400 years, but eventually because of their sin, their rebellion, their idolatry, they're carried into captivity in Babylon where they live in exile for 70 years. While in exile there they atone for their sins and then they're brought back to the land. They move back into the land, rebuild the temple; rebuild the wall, and then the Bible ends at that point in time. And we're going to pick up next week with the 400 silent years between the end of Malachi and the birth of Jesus Christ, and all the things that transpired there to prepare the way for Jesus' coming. If you've ever wondered why Jesus got the reaction he got when he came, and why the people acted the way they did when he came we're going to explain all of that next week.

There are two other big sections in the Bible. The other two big sections are the poetical books. We see the poetical books are the ones that have the songs,

THREE KINDS OF BOOKS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT					
HISTORICAL		POETICAL	PROPHETICAL		
Genesis	1 Samuel	Job	Isaiah	Jonah	
Exodus	2 Samuel	Psalms	Jeremiah	Micah	
Leviticus	1 Kings	Proverbs	Lamentations	Nahum	
Numbers	2 Kings	Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel	Habakkuk	
Deuteronomy	1 Chronicles	Song of Solomon	Daniel	Zephaniah	
Joshua	2 Chronicles		Hosea	Haggai	
Judges	Ezra		Joel	Zechariah	
Ruth	Nehemiah		Amos	Malachi	
	Esther		Obadiah		

Have the poetry, have the wisdom literature – we looked at those, and the other section is the prophetical books. Today we're going to cover 17 prophetical books in 35 minutes. (congregation laughs) Now I have mixed feelings about that because when I'm preaching a small text of scripture my feeling is that we're not getting the big picture. Now we're preaching the big picture and there's so much in here that I'm going to have to skip. Oh, we have a holiday tomorrow . . . we can just stay and go through all of it. (congregation laughs) Somebody order Rudy's – we'll be here for a couple of days. No we're not going to cover it all, but I'm going to take you through it.

In the prophetical books those fit in during the period of the kings and they go all the way through the period of the exile, they go all the way after the exile and they stop 400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. When we think about the books, they're divided basically into various sections, so what I would

DESIGNATION OF THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS

DESIGNATION | Major Prophets - 5; Minor Prophets - 12

TIME PERIOD | Before - 12, During - 2, After the Exile - 3

RECIPIENTS | Judah, Israel, Exiles, Other Nations

suggest is when you're reading through the prophetical books, which some are hard to understand, that you take a Study Bible and when you get to the beginning of a book you read the preamble or the part of the notes that are put in there by the Study Bible author to give you some understanding. Here are some words that you're going to hear when you read through those.

The first one is that some of them called Major Prophets and some called Minor Prophets. The difference between a major prophet and a minor prophet is not the same as the big league versus the little league, okay? Simply the Major Prophets, the books are bigger. It's going to take you longer to read them. The Minor Prophets, the books are smaller.

Second, you'll notice the time in which the books were actually written. So if you're reading a book that was written before the exile, talking to the people who haven't yet gone into captivity you're going to get a different feel than the books that are written during the exile to the exiles in captivity and then the ones written after. So there are 12 of them written before, 2 of them written during – the book of Daniel and the book of Ezekiel – and then 3 of them are written after.

Finally, the third designation is the recipient. If you can figure out whom the book is written to by looking at the beginning of the book that makes it a lot easier. Some of them are written to Judah, the Southern Kingdom, some to Israel, the Northern Kingdom, some are written to the people in exile, some are written to the people in other nations at the time. So a whole lot of difference in all these books.

Now when it comes to the prophets themselves we are talking about some very interesting – could I use the term “bizarre” literature. Lots of figures of speech, lots of poetry, and lots of differences between each of the books, for example, you're going to find some of the books are just straightforward writing. In other words God is speaking and the prophet is just writing down what he says in straightforward language. Real easy to follow. Other books are going to be story form. So for example, the book of Jonah, all about Jonah's rebellion and his attempt to escape, and the fish coming into it, and then speaking back to Nineveh. It's basically a story of what happened.

And then you have other books where you're reading the book and you're thinking that God has asked this prophet to do something bizarre to make a point. Probably the most bizarre of all is the book of Hosea. Now think about this. God compared Israel's rebellion to running after other wives. Like leaving the covenant marriage relationship God has with his people and going after idols was kind of like harlotry or adultery. And so he commands the prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute. Yeah, he really does. Like his prophet, go marry a prostitute. He marries a prostitute, he starts having kids by this prostitute only they're not his kids because she's continuing in her practice. And the whole prophet's life is this sad, sad life to show or to illustrate how God feels about what the people in Israel were doing to him. Now fortunately most of us are

not called to that kind of life, which is probably a really good thing. But that's what God does. He uses the pain of Hosea to communicate a message.

Some of the prophets are very well known. They came from prominent families like Daniel or like Isaiah. Some of them are really obscure. We don't even know who they are. Some of them come from strange backgrounds like Amos who was a goat herder. Now in Central Texas that wouldn't be uncommon, but goat herders weren't the normal to be seen as prophets. That's the breadth of what you see when you're looking at these various prophetic books. And it's really fascinating, so I would encourage you to take some time to read through the prophets because they are very, very interesting and a lot of stuff here for you to get.

So what is a prophet? What is a prophet – what do we mean by prophet? Well prophecy, the idea behind prophecy is the idea that God is communicating a message and he's doing it through a human. I want you guys to remember something. Two times in the Old Testament God is having direct interaction with his people and the people say, "Use a human to speak to us" -- two different times. You know we think, "Well if God just appeared in my bedroom some night and communicated to me boy I'd listen, I'd believe, I'd follow." Well in the past when God did that people said, "God don't do that anymore. I can't take it, I can't take your glory, and it freaks me out. Do it another way."

If you remember when God was speaking to the people at Mount Sinai right after the exodus and all of the manifestations of fire and smoke and lightening and the ground shaking and all that kind of stuff, and when God was speaking and when his voice spoke to the people the people were all freaking out and they said, "God listen. Just talk to Moses. Tell him and he can come and tell us." And that's where the prophet was born. Moses the prophet was the one who received God's message and communicated that to the people.

The second time that happened was during the period of the judges when the people kept rebelling and kept rebelling and finally the people said "God, we don't want you to be our king. We want you to give us a human king." That's wild. "God we don't want to hear from you, we don't want you to be our ruler, we want to have a human face. We want to have a person." People we are inevitably committed to this proposition that there will be a human who will step into this world and fix our problems. And that's what we see clearly in the Old Testament. That's why we have celebrity preachers. Because everybody's looking for a man that I can just listen to what they say – or a woman – that I can just listen to what they say, and "If I just follow Dr. So and So's teaching or Pastor So and So's teaching. If I just listen to everything they say, I watch all

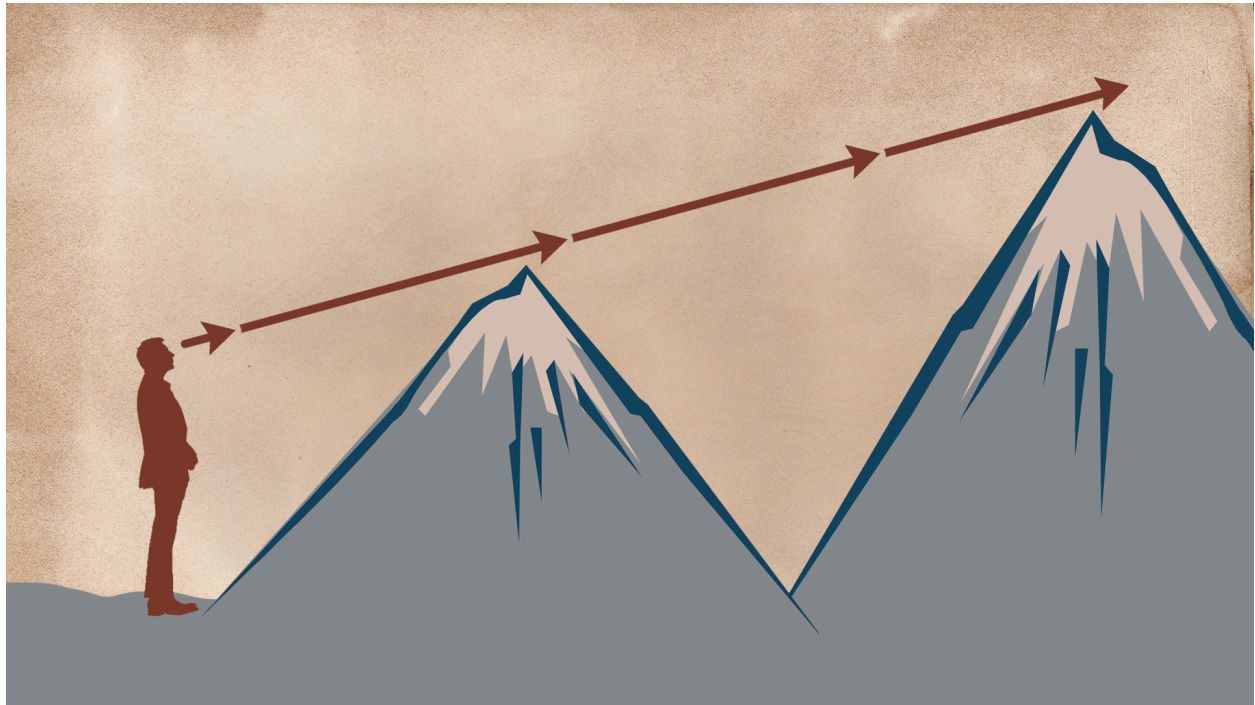
their broadcasts or all their podcasts, just listen to it then I'm going to get all of the truth because I want a face to put there."

It's not any different in the political realm. "If we just get the right candidate in place, if we just get the right President or the right Governor, or the right Congressman. If we just get a human in place then everything is going to work out." We're terrible about that folks. We're terrible about that. We don't want to take personal responsibility to open the Word of God for ourselves and study it. To interact with other people and then to be accountable. Not only to understand it, but to live it out. We just want someone telling us what to do and then that way we can blame them if things go bad, or if we don't like it we can turn our back on them. That's where the prophets came from, so from Moses all the way through Malachi, the prophets were people who spoke on behalf of God. Now one of the obvious questions is, how do we know if they're telling us the truth? How do we know if they're really from God? Can anybody just become a prophet? Well write this down and you'll want to go back and look at this. Deuteronomy 18. It talks about this Office of the Prophet. God makes it very clear that he speaks only through his prophets, and the test of a prophet is 100% accuracy -- 100% accuracy. If a prophet ever claims that something is going to happen and then it doesn't happen he's not from God. That was the Old Testament test. And the punishment for claiming to speak for God and being wrong was capital. Someone stands up and says "Oh I'm a prophet of the most high God and God says here's what y'all ought to do and here's what's going to happen," and it doesn't come to pass, like (Tim demonstrates the cutting off of a person's head). That's it. You're gone buddy. Which made the Office of Prophet not necessarily something desirable. It wasn't the best way to make a living, especially if you were faking it. And so the prophets are the ones who hear the message from God and they speak God's message.

Now there's a lot of kind of wrestling about -- does that mean they are always predicting the future? Well occasionally they're predicting the future; we call it foretelling. But most of the time they are simply communicating the message of God, foretelling, telling the message of God. So the storyline of this section is this: **Prophecy is proclaiming the Word of God**, that's just basic meaning of prophecy. It's proclaiming thus sayeth the Lord or here's what God says. Proclaiming the Word of God **both for the future**, what's going to happen in the future, **and in the present**. For both the future and in the present.

Now there's one phenomenon that we see in the prophets that some of you guys may have experienced before. Anybody ever go hiking in the mountains of Colorado? Like I'm talking beyond the Hill Country, in the big mountains. A few of you guys have done that? I remember the first time I did that, we were

on vacation in Colorado and I took my son Ben along with me. We were going to go climb to the top of this mountain. We picked one that wasn't that high, but we were going to go climb it. He was about 4 at the time and here we go. We're going to go climb the mountain. Girls are staying back at the cabin because, you know, they're girls and we're going to climb the mountain.



(congregation laughs) So Ben and I start off and you know, we're getting tired and it's really hard, but it looks like the mountain isn't that far. It's just right up there, if we can just get to the top of the mountain. The closer we got to the top of the mountain the more we realized that our vision was incorrect. That the top of the mountain was actually another mountain that was much further away and there were a lot of hills and valleys between where we were thinking we were going and where we actually needed to go. The prophets had a similar issue with vision. When the prophets talk about an event that takes place, oftentimes they see an event that has an unfolding over a time period and they compress it all into one single event. Almost like seeing the top of the mountain and not realizing that what I'm looking at is actually another mountain that is way beyond. And so sometimes when you read the prophets they'll have a partial fulfillment. You'll see the beginning of the prophecy

fulfilled, but the rest of it is sometime off in the future. Let me give you an example. Grab your Bibles and turn to Isaiah 9:6. Now we're going to look at one passage - I had about 20 of these and narrowed it down to one. My staff said, "You can't go through all of them." So I'm going to show you one that is

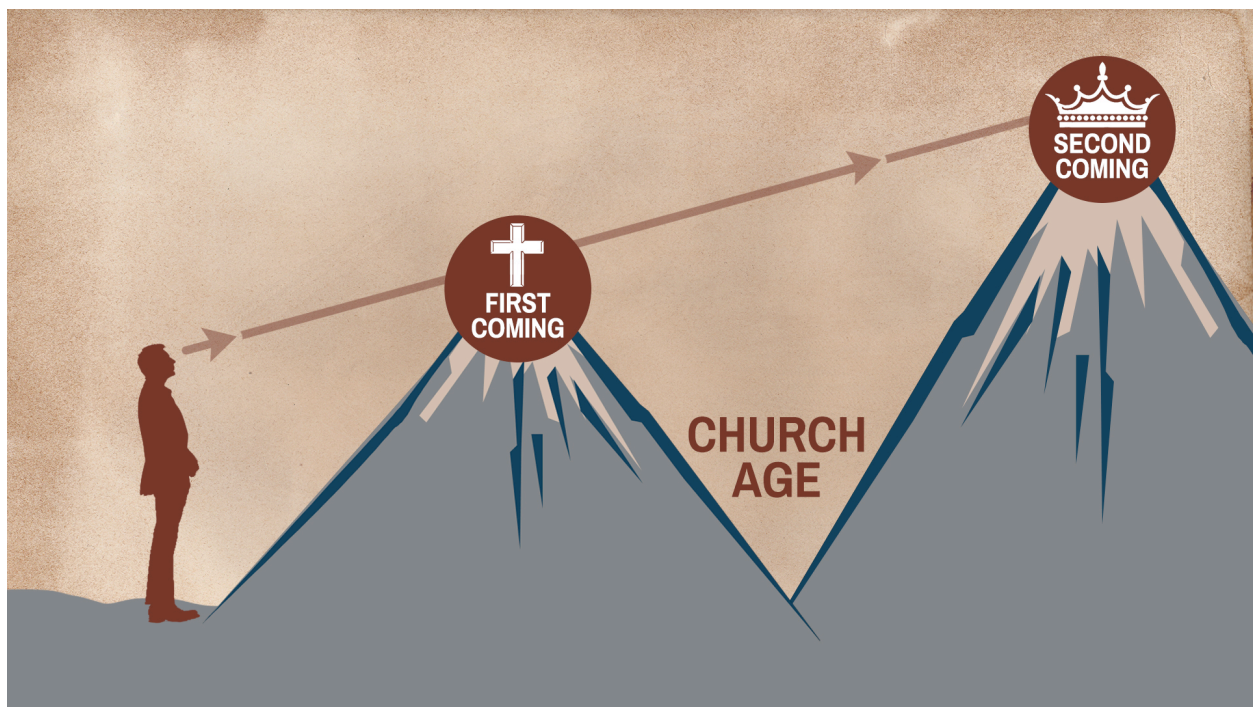
really familiar. This is a prophecy about Jesus Christ coming. You've read this at Christmas many times. In Isaiah 9:6 it says:

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

That's quoted in the New Testament, referring to the birth of the Messiah or Jesus. He's going to come, he's going to be God, and he's going to establish himself. It goes on to say in verse 7:

"Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."

Now you're saying, "Now wait a minute. That didn't happen. Jesus Christ died on the cross and then he rose, and then he ascended to heaven. He didn't establish a kingdom that has no end. What is this referring to? What is he talking about?" Well what we see here is the view of the prophet is he takes the first coming of Jesus and the second coming of Jesus and combines them in as if they are one event. Because from his standpoint he sees it all as if was all



happening simultaneously. What he doesn't understand is what Paul says in Ephesians that there's this mystery that wasn't revealed to the prophets and that is this church age when the gospel goes out to the Gentiles so the Gentiles can be part of God's kingdom too. In the book of Revelation, which by the way we're going to go through the book of Revelation, but the book of Revelation makes it clear that Christ will return, will sit on the throne of David, and will establish an eternal kingdom that will have no end. And so when you're reading the prophecy, sometimes the prophet sees it all as one event, but there's actually a fulfillment or an unfolding of that.

Interestingly enough at the first coming of Jesus, 300 specific prophecies in the Old Testament were fulfilled. So from Jesus' birth to his ascension 300 specific prophecies were fulfilled and yet in those same prophets there are 400 additional prophecies about Jesus that have not been fulfilled. In other words, when Jesus Christ returns to establish his kingdom he's got 400 more prophecies, most of them promises of what Jesus is going to do. Jesus' work is not done. His work of salvation is complete, but he's going to establish a kingdom. We'll talk more about those prophecies next week when we talk about the Messianic anticipation that people were feeling when Jesus came on the scene.

For today, I would love to have the time to walk you through multiple of these books. The more time I've spent in these books, there's just so much here that I'd like us to walk through, but I really can't do that today. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to give you two of the big themes in the prophets. So when you look at the prophets and their overall message, there are two themes that resonate and ring out, and we're going to go through several of these passages in our Bibles today so you can see these themes because you'll see them repeated over and over again.

The first theme is this: Sin has consequences. **Sin has consequences, and the call is to repent before the judgment comes.** To repent before the judgment or the consequences for sin comes. This theme is repeated over and over and over again. In fact, 12 of the 17 books were actually written before the judgment comes. God was, in his grace, warning people about what was going to happen if they didn't listen and they rejected those 12 prophets and then the judgment came. So as we talk about the prophets and the nation of Israel, please allow the Holy Spirit to personalize this message. Sin has consequences. It has consequences. Romans tells us the wages or the payment for sin is death. That means when sin occurs, when someone sins, something dies. That's the way it works. It may be the death of a dream, it may be the death of character, it may be the death of a relationship, it may be the death of potential, and it may be physical death. When sin happens, something dies. That's why God

hates sin. That's why it's so bad. It doesn't create human thriving, it destroys. And so if that's the case, when sin is brought to our attention do we turn from sin, repent, turn from it, or do we continue in it. They chose to continue in it.

Now if you'll grab your Bible and turn to Isaiah chapter 5 I'll show you an example of how this message comes through. Now the prophets acted as prosecuting attorneys, prosecuting God's case against his people. And you'll see two approaches that are taken. There is the legal court where they have the Old Testament law and God has given them the land, he's given them their name, he's given them all these blessings and they have all that, okay? So they got all of that and they got the law. And they are told in Deuteronomy, "Are you willing to commit to this," and they swear they are. That's the old covenant, they swear they are and God promises that "If you follow me I'll bless you, and if you don't you'll face consequences." So these prophets are prosecuting the legal case. Israel you have not done what you committed to do, and therefore, you face consequences. They also prosecute the family court case. The relational case where God says, "I became a husband to you, I loved you, I took care of you, I provided for you and you were supposed to be loyal to me, to worship me only. Not to give yourself to idols and serve other gods. That was our covenant together, the family covenant, but you've chased after other gods. You've committed adultery with other gods, and you've broken our family covenant." So God will use the prophets to point to these two violations - you've broken our legal agreement, you've broken our family agreement, our relational agreement. Watch how he does it. In chapter 5 of Isaiah he says:

"I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut a winepress as well."

Think about it, for those of you have farmed in hard, hilly soil. In order to plant a vineyard you have to first of all go in and clear the ground. And when you clear the ground you produce a lot of rocks. Anybody who works in their back yard in Austin understands the problem of the rocks. So you've got to pull all of those rocks up, get the soil ready, and then use those rocks to build a fence around it to keep predators out to keep people from trampling it. He says he picked the choicest, the best vine stock and planted it in his vineyard. He built a tower and then he hollowed out a winepress. What they would do in those days would be to take a big rock and chip away and chip away and chip away, and literally build a winepress out of a rock itself. So if you can imagine days and days and days out there with a chisel chiseling on this thing, and he did all of that for what purpose? It says:

"Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit."

He looked for a crop of good grapes, but yielded only bad fruit. He says:

"Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard."

See the prosecutor there. Judge between me and my vineyard.

"What more could I have done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes why did it yield only bad? Now I will tell you what I'm going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall and it will be trampled. I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it. The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel and the people of Judah are the garden of his delight. He looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress."

He looked for a civil society where people treated each other according to the law, and he saw the opposite of that. And then he pronounces in this chapter five woes. A woe is a curse, and he calls out five different kinds of behavior in the passage. The first one is greed. The land barrens who pushed the little guys off the land to create bigger and bigger and bigger estates. God never intended his people to be only aristocracy. He loves the little guy. Greed.

The second one that he brings to the table is a curse on those who party as a way of life. People who drink and dance and have fun and spend their life indulging themselves rather than building into the fabric of a positive society. Pleasure, entertainment only, and that being the god of these people. That hits a little close to home.

The third one in verse 18, this is my favorite one. He says:

"Woe to those who draw sin along with the cords of deceit, and wickedness as with the cart ropes."

So here's the picture. Remember the Red Wagon Flyer. You got that wagon and its loaded up with your sin, your bad behavior and you're pulling that wagon with you as you go, and he says the cord or the rope that you use to pull the wagon, that's deceit. In other words, you use deceit or lying or trickery to justify the sin in the cart. Now how do you do that? Look at what he says in verse 19:

"To those who say, 'Let God hurry; let him hasten his work so that we may see it. Let it approach, let the plan of the Holy One of Israel come so that we may know it.'"

In other words, "We don't know your plan God, we haven't seen your work, we don't know what to do, and we don't have any idea." He says "That is called deceit." When we're saying things like, "Well what is God's will really? Do we really know what God's will is? How do we know that?" And we're using that as an excuse to carry our sin along, and so that's what Jesus ran into. What were the rabbis saying, "Well God says that a man is supposed to keep his covenant with his wife. He made a promise to her. Keep your covenant to your wife. Well what does that really mean?" Does that mean under no circumstances to ever be divorced? What if she burns his eggs? Like that was actually an example; that was an example. God makes this covenant of marriage because God loves women and in that world that was one of the clearest protections, and yet it didn't mean anything. "We're tired of this woman, we're going to get another one. What does it really mean?" What do these things really mean? How do we really know? "Who is my neighbor? I'll love my neighbor as myself, but I can't really figure out who he is?" That's using deceit and God is saying, "Hey I wrote this stuff down in my law so there would be no confusion and you guys have managed through religious corruption to make, to deceive everybody so that we can do whatever we want to do." God says curse on that. Curse on that folks.

He goes on in 21, curse on those who call good evil and evil good, who change the values of a culture. I mean clearly in our culture we do that. Anything that refers to a healthy sexual relationship within a marriage is usually mocked and laughed at, and yet we call good experimentation, and so many people are being damaged by all of this. And yet we've changed the rules. We've got completely different standards than we used to have, and certainly different than the ones that come out of the Bible. He says in verse 21:

"Woe to you to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight."

The intellectual culture that says, "We don't need a god, we've got it all figured out." Curse on you he says. Verse 22:

"Curse on those people who are so elite, the connoisseurs of everything except justice who acquit the guilty for a bribe and deny justice to the innocent."

The ruling elite that get away with murder. God says, "Listen, I have done everything I could for you and you have taken it and used it as an opportunity to indulge yourself in things that damage you and other people. I'm not going to let that keep going on." Here's the thing folks; God has designs on your life. If you're here today and you don't even believe in God and you're kind of wondering, "I'm here, what does all this got to do with -" you don't even believe in God. Whether you believe in him or not, God did not give you breath, he did not put you on this planet for nothing. He expects that you're going to take this life that he's given you and you're going to honor him and honor yourself, what it means to be human, and honor the people around you by walking in righteousness, by living in justice, by treating people with kindness. That's what he expects out of all of his creation. Whether you believe in him or not, that's what he expects out of us. And sin damages us, it damages people, it hurts people, and so God is not going to let that go on indefinitely. And so our call is to repent, to turn from that and to come back to God. And if we don't do that, get ready for consequences. When Paul says in Romans chapter 8, there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Jesus, he doesn't say that there are therefore now no consequences for those who are in Jesus. And one of the ways we obscure the truth is we say, "Well grace covers it all, it doesn't matter what I do." It's true that grace covers you so that you will have entrance into his kingdom, but it doesn't protect you from the consequences of what you choose to do that's damaging to yourself and others. That Old Testament message that they didn't get, and they dealt with it is repent, turn. Sin has consequences. That's the negative message, the harsh message, the hard message spoken in love by a loving God.

But there's also an incredibly positive message that comes here, and this incredible positive message is throughout the prophets, and this message is this: **God's plan is actually to save his people and to establish his kingdom.** His plan is to save his people and to establish his kingdom, and he's going to pull it off without our help. He's going to do it himself. And we see he's going to do it in three things and they're real clear in the passages. The first one is he's going to send a Messiah to fix our problem with sin. Turn to Isaiah chapter 53. Isaiah chapter 53 is a prophecy about Jesus 600 years before Jesus is born that describes his crucifixion. In verse 10 of Isaiah 53 it goes into the result or what's going to happen because of his sacrificial death. In verse 10 it says:

"Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul he will see the light of life and be satisfied;"

After he suffers he's going to rise from the dead. He's going to be satisfied.

“And by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.”

That’s an Old Testament word for bearing their sin.

“Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong because he poured out his life to death and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

By Jesus Christ and his death on the cross he provides the opportunity for those who put their trust in him to be forgiven, to have their sins cleansed and paid for. To be able to be adopted into God’s family and stand before God before righteous even though we haven’t done the righteousness, and Jesus Christ was taking the punishment for our sin. The Messiah came to pay for our sin.

God also promises that he will now establish a new covenant with us. If you turn to Jeremiah 31, Jeremiah prophesies about the new covenant. He says this in verse 31 of chapter 31:

“The time is coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt because they broke my covenant though I was a husband to them.”

See the husband-wife terminology.

“husband to them,” declares the Lord.

In other words the mosaic covenant, I’m going to make one different than that one. And here’s what he says:

“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,’ declares the Lord. ‘I will put my law in their minds and write on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,’ declares the Lord. ‘For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

In other words, rather than having a moral code that's written down that we have to go check to see if we're living according to it, he says, "I am actually going to take the principles, the morals of that and I'm going to imprint it into your brain. That will be the way you think, that will make sense to you. I will imprint it on your heart. In other words your will, what you desire will be good and will be just and will be kind and will be righteous and will honor me." In other words it's going to become part of the fabric of who you are. So as God forgives people through Jesus Christ and brings them into a relationship with himself, there's coming a day when his new covenant will be established and we won't have to say, "Hey do you know the Lord" because everybody knows him, because they have an intimate, personal, permanent relationship with him. The tendency or the bent towards selfishness and sin will be gone. It will be gone. That's why when Jesus Christ picked up the cup right before the crucifixion and said "This cup is the new covenant and my blood," he was looking at a group of men that were deeply flawed and promising that his death would secure in them a pure and clean conscience and a pure and clean mind. And I've got to tell you I can't wait for that day when God does that in me. I can't wait for that day. That's coming.

Third he says, "I'm going to promise you a kingdom that I'm planning to establish." God is going to establish a kingdom. Turn back to Isaiah, second to the last chapter, chapter 65 of Isaiah. God promises salvation through the Messiah, God promises a new covenant, a changed heart, and then God promises a new place, a new kingdom. He says in verse 17, he says:

"Behold I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered nor will they come to mind, but be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create. For I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people. The sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more."

I'm going to make a new heaven and a new earth promised and prophesied in the book of Revelation. It's not going to be a place of pain. It's not going to be a place of suffering. It's not going to be a place of sorrow. It's going to be a place of joy and God will dwell with his people. Jump down to verse 23:

"They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune."

Moms wouldn't it be great to wake up in the morning and think nothing bad will happen to my kids in this day in this place because nothing bad ever happens here. I mean what a comfort that would be to not have to worry about that.

"for they will be a people blessed by the Lord, they and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer. While they are still speaking I will hear."

In other words you don't pray and wait for an answer because God is there, and as soon as you start to speak he anticipates exactly what you need. He understands and he answers. He says:

"The wolf and the lamb will feed together. The lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain says the Lord."

There's coming a day when God is going to establish a kingdom, and all who have been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Messiah who died will gain entrance to that kingdom, not based on their good works or their merit. They'll gain entrance into that kingdom based on what Jesus has done on their behalf. They will live in that kingdom, paradise regained, experiencing for all of eternity what God intended when he created Adam in the beginning. And the prophets end the Old Testament by God speaking his final word. "Folks get ready. It's coming, it's coming, it's going to blow your mind. You couldn't do it, you couldn't keep the law, you couldn't keep your marriage covenant with me, but guess what? I'm going to make it possible, I'm going to do this for you." And what's God calling on his people, then and now, is that we would take that blessing and live on a day-to-day basis in light of it. In other words grasp it and act like it. We get this folks, we get this. This is not hard for us to get.

We stand on the eve of Memorial Day where we remember that there have been evil, evil people in the world bent on dictatorship, despotism, destruction; people who live in a world of genocide who made nations bow to them as they destroyed their people. And time and time again the citizens of the United States have called their young people to put on the military uniform, to march in foreign lands, to liberate people all over the earth from that tyranny so that they could be free and so that we could be free. What do you do with your freedom? Smoke crack? What do you do with your freedom? Build your own personal empire at the cost of the little guy? What do you do with your freedom? Lock your mind into pornography? What do you do with your freedom? Verbally abuse the people that you love that live around you? What do you do with your freedom? Carry grudges? What do you do with your freedom? Act in pride, look down on people? What do you do with your freedom? Is that why they died? Is that why they died? We all say "No, that's not why they died." We have a responsibility to those who have shed blood to make the best life that we can possibly make for ourselves and the people around us. And as Christians, Jesus Christ shed blood. He shed blood so that

you could be a holy people. You could be a joy to the God of Heaven. If you're not, today's a really good day to repent, come back to God. He'll forgive you, he'll restore you, he'll change you, he'll establish a covenant with you, he'll begin to write his laws on your heart and in your mind, and you will benefit and so will we.

Let's bow our heads for prayer. Father in heaven we truly are a blessed people. Whether the people in this room know you or whether they don't, just being born here, live here, and having the chance to experience this country and all the blessing of it. We can go where we want to go, we can live where we want to live, we can date who we want to date, marry who we want to marry. We've got so much and yet sometimes we take it so for granted with what we do with our life. And for those who know you father, through Jesus you've given us the Holy Spirit to be in us. You've given us the guidance of your Word, you've given us spiritual gifts, you've given us a purpose, relationships within the church. O Father may we honor you by following you fully. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

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