

Some Thoughts From the Minor Prophets

The elders are teaching a class on the Minor Prophets during the fall quarter, which begins today. One overarching lesson from the minor prophets is that God's people often fail to remain faithful when faced with the issues of life. While we live in a different world from that of 800 - 400 BC, were the issues of life these people faced that much different from those we face?

During the 8th century (about 760 to 750 BC – before Assyria began aggressively expanding and about the time Jonah preached to Nineveh), Israel enjoyed a period of prosperity. Along with prosperity came moral and political corruption, covetousness, injustice and immorality by the people in power. Furthermore, there was decline of interest in religion. Amos preached against these evils and warned the people of the punishment to come.

Sound like America in 2016?

Zephaniah prophesied between 630 and 625 BC, about 110 years later than Amos. War was hovering over God's people from every direction. The Assyrians were in decline, the Chaldeans (Babylon) were gaining strength, and Egypt was competing with these two powers. Also, Manasseh, the King of Judah, was one of the worst kings in their history. Yet the people in Jerusalem showed little concern. Zephaniah warned against complacency and declared that the Lord “will punish the men, who say in their heart, the Lord will not do good, nor will He do evil” (Zephaniah 1:12) .

Does Zephaniah's message apply to America in 2016?

These two examples seems to reflect the life-styles of many in our society and possibly some in the Lord's church. Perhaps we do not think of ourselves as being complacent and certainly if asked if we believe that the Lord is active in our lives, we would surely respond positively. But do our actions reflect our words and self-assessment?

What can we learn from this brief overview of these two books? First, in order to avoid being complacent, attention to following Jesus' teaching and example requires that we discipline ourselves, i.e., train ourselves to act in accordance with His will. Secondly, there are two verses which are always timely and to which we should give careful attention: “*Take heed to yourselves less your hearts be weighed down with -- cares of this life--*” (Luke 21:34), and “*Therefore let him who thinks he stand take heed less he fall*” (1 Cor. 10:12).

For the elders,
Don Denton