

THE MAJOR LESSONS OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS

CONNECT BREAK THE ICE AND GET PEOPLE TALKING

- Tell about a time you experienced a significant change of heart about something.
- If you could change one thing about the world around us, what would it be?
- Have you ever read the Old Testament Prophets, and if so, what was your experience like?

TRUTH UNDERSTAND AND DISCUSS THE SCRIPTURE'S MEANING

In this short series, we will be exploring the four Major Prophets of the Old Testament, and the timelessness of their teachings. The lessons they sought to impart to the people of God from generations past are, in so many ways, still so relevant for us today. In order to understand the ministry of Jesus in his time, and our own time, we must understand that we are all a part of the same story, nearing a climactic end when Christ returns. This week we will be studying three key sections in the book of Ezekiel in order to help us better understand the entirety of his works. For more background on the book of Ezekiel, we recommend watching the videos provided on the Bible Project website.

A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT...

READ: Ezekiel 36:22-28

DISCUSS: What is God promising to do in these verses?

God's indictment against his people is that in the hardness of their hearts, they have succumb to the worship of false gods, resulting in not only the departure of God's own glory from the Temple of Jerusalem (chapter 10), but also the Babylonian Exile (chapter 24). While God condemns this wickedness, he also promises to Israel that he will bring healing—not to their circumstances, but to their very individual souls. He promises to give new hearts of flesh in place of their stoney hard hearts, and to put his own living Spirit within them in order to return to them as their God (11:20).

...ARE REQUIRED TO HAVE INVINCIBLE HOPE...

READ: Ezekiel 37:1-14

DISCUSS: How does the image of the dry bones illustrate why God's work in us is so necessary?

The vision of the valley of dry bones is meant to indicate that in their current state, Israel is indeed spiritually dead. Because of the hardness of their hearts and the absence of God's life-giving presence, his people are as

dead as the skeletons before Ezekiel, and unable to rectify their circumstances. Therefore, as God promises to change their hearts, the people of Israel are also drawn up from their spiritual graves into life by the Spirit of God filling their lungs and animating their bodies. This correlates directly to the creation account in Genesis (see also Job 33:1-4), and in this way, God “recreates” his people into a new spiritual life defined by God’s presence and healing.

...FOR A NEW WORLD

READ: Ezekiel 47:7-12

DISCUSS: How does the vision of future hope and peace unite the ideas of the two previous passages?

God’s healing work in his people does not end with Israel. His promises are for the nations, and all of creation. The depiction in our last passage shows how the life that begins in the New Temple, flows out into the nations and into the very natural world around him. The images used in this depiction describe that which is life-giving, robust, and teeming with evidence of God’s healing work that began from within his own people.

GRACE SEE HOW THE PASSAGE CONNECTS TO JESUS

And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (John 20:22)

It is only through Jesus that you and I experience the healing that God depicts in the passages studied above. It is God alone who acts to change his people’s hearts and give the Holy Spirit to dwell within them—and this only through repentance to salvation in Jesus Christ. Accepting Christ’s sacrifice for sin is indeed the willing embrace of all the promises of God becoming fulfilled in our own lives as we look forward to God’s restoration of all creation.

CHANGE APPLY THE PASSAGE TO OUR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND ACTIONS

- Are there areas of your life in which you have hardened your heart toward God?
- Do God’s promises of future redemption of the world give you hope? Do you struggle to relate to them?
- Who in your life needs God’s Spirit breathed within them? How can you be praying for them more regularly?

PRAYER RESPOND TO THE PASSAGE IN PRAYER

- Pray that God would help us celebrate the work he has done within each of us.
- Pray for continually humble posture before God, with soft hearts and willing spirits.