

## ROUTE 66

### The Torah

#### Genesis

The text for Genesis is chapter 22 the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. This story is an announcement by God of his plan to save the world. Abraham is an image of the Father and Isaac is an image of Jesus. Abraham is placed in a predicament because the very key (Isaac) to God's fulfillment of his promise to him, to bless the world through him and make his descendants like the stars, was now called to be sacrificed.

With Isaac we are shown the image of the obedient son. Abraham was old and Isaac was probably in his late teens. At minimum, Isaac is strong enough to carry the wood necessary for the sacrifice uphill. This means that Isaac was strong enough to resist Abraham and not become the sacrificial offering. This is Jesus. Jesus had the option to come down from the cross and instead submitted to the will of his Father (Mt 27:40).

The geographic location of the sacrifice is significant. Moriah is Jerusalem. In the end, God provides a sacrifice for Abraham so that he will not have to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham calls the place Jehovah Jireh~ the Lord will provide, and indeed he has. Almost two thousand years before Jesus God announced to the world that on a particular spot he planned to sacrifice his own obedient Son for the salvation of the world. What a marvelous God we have that he is clear in his intentions for the salvation of the world.

#### Exodus

The text for Exodus is Ex 25:10-22. The text gives a description of the "mercy seat" v, 17, 21, which is the lid on the Ark of the Covenant. An analysis of the Ark in the life of the Hebrew people reveals that the Ark:

- Was a miniature throne of God, the cherubim on the ark are symbols of the cherubim around the throne of God~ Rev. 4:1-11
- Was a place for God's glory and presence to dwell on earth

- Contained the promises/obligations of the covenant~ 10 Commandments, Aaron's staff as the high priest, and the manna from heaven which fed the people
- Was a place of atonement
- Went before the people in battle

In Romans 3:25 the Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus is the 'Mercy Seat' in the flesh. By saying that Paul also implies that Jesus, in his body, takes on the functions of the Ark.

- Jesus is a miniature throne of God which allows us to approach the Father in prayer
- Jesus as fully God and fully man is the presence of God on earth where humanity meets divinity
- Jesus' body contains the new promises of God, he is the high priest of Melchizedek interceding on our behalf (Heb 5, 7-8), and his body perpetually feeds the people Jn 6:35.
- Jesus is the perfect sacrifice and the place of atonement
- Jesus defeats death at the empty tomb, he defeated Satan at his ascension (Rev 12:7:17) and he goes before us in battle.

As in the story of Genesis, God is using the Ark of the Covenant to prepare the people for Jesus.

### Leviticus

A review of the Law shows that there are 613 laws in the Torah: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Law operates as an ancient constitution, it is proscriptive not descriptive. Outside of the Code of Hammurabi, the Law of Moses is one of the oldest known codified set of laws in human history. The Law was important because it was an instrument of God used to teach a group of slaves how to be a nation. The law had specific functions:

- Helped the people interact with God ~ Lv. 1-10
- Kept them healthy ~Lv. 11-15 issue of disease in the camp
- Made the Jews ‘different’ holy from other nations and their gods Lv. 16-20
- Helped them in community life and worship Lv. 21-27

How are Christians supposed to live with the law since Jesus came to fulfill the law not abolish it? Christians ought to be mindful of the ‘spirit of the law’ and not its letter. Additionally, Paul’s admonition that everything is permissible but not beneficial goes a long way toward aiding the Christian to implement the ‘spirit of the law’ in their lives. (1Co 10:23).

### Numbers

The first nine chapters of the book are final instructions to the priests before they start their journey into the promise land. In chapter ten God instructs the people to break camp and the cloud of his presence and the Ark move out before the people. However, not long on their journey into the promise land adversity strikes the people. A central issue in Numbers is that the Israelites do not know how to walk with God. Walking with God consists of character traits that need to become central to our personalities.

#### *Gratitude:*

In Num 11 the people complain to God about their food. The manna from heaven was not enough. Never mind that the Israelites were no longer slaves. The people lacked gratitude for their freedom and God’s provision. Instead the Israelites ask for quail and God gives it to them, after which, he sends on them a plague.

The next illustration of a lack of gratitude is seen in chapter 21. God provides the Israelites a victory over Arad, and instead of being grateful the Israelites whine that they should go back to Egypt and slavery. God sends a plague of snakes upon the Israelites and the only remedy is to look upon a bronze snake mounted on a pole made by Moses. This is the origin of the Caduceus, emergency medical symbol (Jn 3:14).

#### *Humility:*

In chapter 12 Miriam and Aaron do not like Moses' choice of a wife and decide that because they also have seen and talked to God that they should be the leaders. God tells Moses of their rebellion and calls a meeting with the three siblings. God departs the meeting and leaves Miriam leprous. Moses intercedes for her and she is healed. Moses' brother and sister seek to unseat him because of pride; they believe they could do a better job of leading than Moses.

In chapter 16 Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, are fed up with Moses' leadership. He has not lead them into the promise land and they are wandering the desert. Never mind that the Israelites are wandering because of their disobedience when they came back from spying the land. The three men build a group of leaders and rally the people to support them. Moses tells the people to separate themselves from the rogue group. Moses tells them that if they are doing the Lord's will they will die a natural death if not may they die unnaturally. At that moment the ground opens up and swallows the three men, their families, and their supporters. Just because a person thinks he or she should lead, does not mean he or she should lead. Humility is taking account of our strengths and weakness, gifts and shortcomings, and give them to God for him to use to build his kingdom as he sees fit.

### *Obedience*

Walking with God requires obedience. The Israelites spy out the land in Num 13. In chapter 14 a group of spies is full of fear and they believe that they cannot defeat the current inhabitants of the land. Not only is there disbelief, but the spies, outside of Joshua and Caleb, deliberately spread a bad report and convince the people to go back to Egypt. It is this deliberate disobedience that inspires the wrath of God, the punishment is for the rebellious generation to die in the dessert.

In chapter 20:8 the people are crying out for water. God tells Moses to speak to the rock and it will bring forth water for the people. Instead, Moses strikes the rock disobeying God. As a result Moses is not allowed to enter into the promise land.

Something to notice is that none of these issues that involve walking with God, have anything to do with observing the Law. One would think that the Israelites would trip up on one of the 613

Laws, but instead it is their inability to walk with God that trips them up. For the Christian, we are grateful because we follow Jesus and Jesus knows how to walk with the Father. Jesus teaches us how to walk with God, and when we mess up his grace covers it all.

### Deuteronomy:

The book of Deuteronomy contains instructions from Moses to the Israelite people. Imagine the words of a loving papa to his children heading off to college, this is the tone of Deuteronomy. Throughout the entire book a phrase, “When you enter the land which the Lord God swore to give to your forefathers...” is a statement that appears 54 times in the book. The repetition of the phrase delivered either by Moses or Yahweh himself is illustrative of the importance of the point God wants to communicate to the people. God wants the people to understand that they did not earn the Promise Land rather, it was given to them, it is a grace.

The application of this point for the Christian life cannot be missed. The journey of the Hebrew people into the promise land is a foreshadowing of the Christians life with God. As God called the people into a covenant so God calls us to a covenant. As the Hebrew people were slaves to Pharaoh, so were we slaves to Satan and sin. As God breaks the gods of Egypt, ultimately Pharaoh the biggest god, and frees people from bondage, so does Christ free us from our bondage to sin and Satan. As the Israelites consummate the journey to a new life by crossing the Red Sea, so does the Christian consummate his or her new life with baptism. The Israelites at Sinai receive the 12 Words, we receive the new covenant of Christ. The disobedience in Numbers is our disobedience as we learn to walk with God. Their conquest of the promise land in Joshua is a foreshadowing of our need to fight for the promise land of the kingdom on earth, and the complete occupation of the land foreshadows our victory in heaven.

The final instructions of Moses to the Hebrew people are found in Du 30:15-20. In these particular passages Moses says that the people have the capacity to choose life and death, blessings or curses. Moses pleads with them to:

- Love God
- Walk in his ways
- Keep his commandments

The sum total of what is required to experience the blessing of God finds its fullness in three simple choices. Deuteronomy is an important time in the life of the people of God, where their leader hands over the reins and pleads with them to hold fast to God in all moments of life.

### Joshua:

The book of Joshua is summed up in the first chapter. God says to Joshua, “Be strong and courageous, for the Lord you God will be with you wherever you go.” God says this phrase to Joshua three times in chapter one. However, this is not the first time that Joshua has heard these words. In Deuteronomy 31 Moses delivers the same phrase to Joshua as he hands over the mantle of leadership to Joshua.

As Joshua battles for the conquest of the promise land God instructs Joshua not be afraid, but to be strong and courageous. Joshua hears these words in 8:1 at the conquest of Ai, he hears them at 10:8, and v.25 as Joshua prepares to battle with 5 kings, and he hears the words in 11:6 as the people prepare for battle with kings from the north.

The conquest of the promise land by Joshua and the Israelites is a wonderful image of the Christian life on earth. We are taking possession of the promise land, but will not have complete victory until we are with Christ in the heavenlies. In the meantime, we must battle for everything that is promised. God did not just hand over the promise land to the Israelites, and he does not hand over the kingdom to us, we must struggle for it.

I believe the hard work of Joshua is found in 24:14-24. Joshua is finished with battle and he instructs the people to choose whom they will serve, Yahweh God, or some other god. Then Joshua remarks with a well known phrase, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Our battle front is choosing God in every relationship and circumstance, no matter the cost. It is not easy to be a Christian we must struggle for our faith, God commands us to, “To be strong and courageous, for the Lord our God is with us wherever we go.”

A final word about Joshua, if I were to say Joshua’s name in Hebrew it would be ‘yeshua’— literally *God saves*, or *salvation*. In Hebrew there is no letter ‘j’, so if I were to say yeshua in English I would add the ‘j’ and the name would be Joshua. In first century Greek the

name is Jesus. The sixth book of the bible involving the story of the conquest of the promise land is titled “*Jesus*”. Joshua son of Nun is an announcement of Jesus the Son of God.

## Judges

The judges were a group of people that exercised authority over the Israelites in a time span ranging from the death of Joshua until the prophetic ministry of Samuel. The office of judge was instituted under Moses’ leadership. There are two accounts of the creation of the office of judge, the first is found in Ex 18. Moses’ father-in-law Jethro visits him after the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea. Jethro observed Moses and all of the various duties and responsibilities that were part of his leadership mantle. Jethro saw the burden and told Moses he needed to select people to place underneath him and charge them with the task of caring for the people. These are the elders of Israel also known as the judges. The next account of the institution of the office of judge is found in Nu 11:16-17. This time it is God himself who instructs Moses to create the office of elder, allowing them to judge, and lighten Moses’ load.

Who were the judges? A portion of the judges were born in the forty year period when Israel wandered the desert under Moses, they were born in a time when the nation of Israel was learning to walk with God. Another portion of the judges were born in time period when the Israelites were engaged in a conquest for the promise land, they were under Joshua. Some judges were born in the time when the conquest was finished. The time frame matters because what the judges experienced growing up impacted the type of leader they would be.

The key verse in the book of Judges is Judges 2:11-23. The section of Scripture clearly indicates that when the judge did not follow God, the people rebelled and worshiped other gods, and Israel would experience oppression from their neighbors. However, when God raised up a judge and the judge followed him, all was well for Israel. This theme repeats itself throughout the entire Scriptures. The point is simple; *everything rises and falls with leadership*.

There are some noteworthy judges; Othniel, Caleb’s younger brother, Debora- a woman judge and leader of Israel, Gideon, and Jephthah. In each of their stories these judges served God and the nation of Israel was safe. However, they were not perfect. Gideon and Jephthah in particular made some significant mistakes (Du 8:13-27, Du 11:29-40).

The most famous judge is Sampson. Sampson in many ways is the prototypical leader, he has all the outward attributes that people look for in leaders. Sampson is physically gifted with strength and he is witty. Today in American we like our leader's tall, physically attractive, charismatic, and engaging, I am sure Sampson was all these things. However, Sampson had the same issue that most leaders have— an inability to control his libido. Women were Sampson's greatest weakness. Sampson was born a Nazarene meaning he and taken the Nazarene vow and not cut his hair or partaken of alcohol his entire life. Sampson is a type of Christ, only the complete opposite. Sampson had all the potential for great leadership, but fell short of all he could have been. Jesus is different.

The criterion for leadership in the kingdom of God is simple. Does the leader fear God and is he or she will to be obedient. For Christians our model is Jesus. The verse that is a clarion call is Philippians 2:5-11. *Our attitude needs to be that of Christ Jesus who did not consider equality with God something to be clutched onto. Rather, he emptied himself (of the attributes and prerogatives that come with being God) and took on the form of a servant made in the likeness of men. He became obedient even unto death on a cross. Bruce Revised Standard Version BRSV.*

All of us are in leadership positions to one degree or another. We must learn from the God-fearing judges and Jesus to model our leadership after their leadership. As leaders God wants us to worship him only and be obedient.

## Ruth

The first chapter of the book of Ruth sets the stage for the story. We find a Hebrew family that has journeyed to their southeast because there is a famine in the land. Elimelech and his wife and two sons, find gentile wives. Eventually, the men die and the women are left with each other. Naomi encourages her daughters-in-law to leave her and go back to their families and their gods. Ruth responds by saying the following, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people, *and your God shall be my God.*" (Ruth 1:15-16) Ruth's response cannot be overstated. She is in essence choosing to leave her family and her way of life that she had

known, and instead chose to go with her mother-in-law. By leaving her family Ruth is abandoning her god and choosing to follow YHWH God.

Ruth is an illustration of the salvation journey. To choose Christ requires that on different levels, we abandon our birth-families and join the family of God. A question for consideration is, “How does God reward a gentile who whole-hearted chooses him?”

In chapter two, Ruth and Naomi are back in the ancestral town of Bethlehem. Naomi instructs Ruth to go and glean a kinsman’s field, that person is Boaz. We do not know much about Boaz; however, by virtue of the fact that he is applying the gleaning law (Lv 19:9-10) to his own field suggests an obedient servant of God. When Boaz notices Ruth, he decides to take care of her. I would like to suggest that the dialogue between Ruth and Boaz in 2:8-13 is a dialogue between Christ and anyone who chooses him. Verse twelve is important because it is the reward for gentiles who choose God, and the image of wings of serve as a visual cue in chapter 3.

In chapter three the harvest has arrived and Naomi encourages Ruth to seek Boaz as her husband. Ruth visits Boaz in the evening and lies at his feet and asks him to become her covering- a direct reference to God’s covering wings in 2:12. Ruth requests that Boaz become her kinsman-redeemer. Ruth leaves Boaz in the morning and describes the events of the evening to Naomi who says that Boaz will not rest until the matter of who is to be Ruth’s kinsman-kinsman redeemer is settled. The statement by Naomi is a direct word about Christ. Jesus does not rest until the matter is settled. Jesus wants to be our redeemer. Boaz’ actions are an indicator of God’s activity toward the salvation of his creation.

In chapter four Boaz goes to the city gate and settles the matter and becomes Ruth’s redeemer. The women of the town speak a prophetic word over Naomi about the children that would result from the union of Boaz and Ruth. “May the lord make you (Naomi) like Rachael and Leah- the mothers of the twelve tribes of Israel.” Following the genealogy in verse 16 to the end we learn that Naomi is in fact the great, great, grandmother of King David. What does God do when a gentile chooses him, he uses her choice to bless the nation and give them their greatest king.

The story does not end there, for in Matthew we learn that Jesus comes from this genealogical line. That means the Christ has gentile blood in his family tree. It makes perfect sense because he came to not only be the redeemer-kinsman for the Jew but also the gentile. God used the faithful choice of a non-Jew to save the world. We do not know what God will do with the decisions we make every day. However, one-person, choosing to leave what they know and follow YHWH God can change the world.

## 1 Samuel

The book of 1 Samuel starts off with the story of Hannah. Hannah is a woman who is married to a man named Elkanah. Elkanah has another wife named Peninnah who has birthed children for him. Hannah has not given Elkanah any children, but even so Elkanah loves Hannah more than Peninnah. As a result, Peninnah shoves Hannah's barrenness in her face. The book of Samuel is about the last judge of Israel, who becomes God's agent in pointing out the anointed one, or messiah. It is interesting that Samuel's family has the same story as the founding family of Israel; Jacob, Leah and Rachel. Even though Rachel is Jacob's love, she is barren and it is Leah who has children—a fact that she is more than happy to make known to Rachael.

Hannah's story not only looks back to Jacob, it also looks forward to the New Testament. In Luke we learn that Mary's cousin Elizabeth is barren. When she conceives we learn that her child will also point the way to the anointed one. Samuel is important because he is a link to the past and the future.

The book of 1 Samuel has many stories that can be applied to our lives; I would like to focus on two. First, is Israel's demand for a king. In 1 Samuel 8 the elders of Israel are motivated by a desire to be like the other nations, from this desire they demand that God give them a king. In great frustration Samuel goes to God and tells him of their request. God tells Samuel to grant the people's request and give them a king. In so doing, the Israelites reject God (8:7-8). Samuel speaks to the elders of Israel and tells them the issues that come with a king and further warns them that when the kings oppresses the people they need not cry out to God, because he will not answer (v.18).

There seriousness of the event cannot be over stated. God gave the people the law to make the Israelites different from other nations and God wanted to be their king. The Israelites

reject their divine calling out of a carnal desire to be like everyone else. God, in his mercy, seems to say, “OK you want it, you got it, but don’t come crying to me when it does not work out, because you will experience the consequences of your decision.” Christians should tremble in fear at the thought of rejecting our God-given destinies for the temporal satisfaction of fitting in and being like everyone else. Moreover, Christians need to understand that in Christ Jesus, God has once again become King over his people. As God’s elect, we must place Christ on the throne above all else.

The second story for consideration is that of Saul’s fall. Saul was given an order to completely destroy the Amalakites in battle. God had a specific grudge against the Amalakites (Ex 17:8-16). Saul and his army decide to disobey God’s direct command by saving the best livestock and preserving the life of the Amalakite king, Agag. Moreover, Saul builds a monument to himself for the victory instead of the YHWH, who provided the victory. God tells Samuel that he rejects Saul as his king and that the mantle of leadership will be given to someone else.

When Samuel meets up with Saul he tries to lie about his actions, then tries to blame the troops under him, then tries to rationalize his behavior (v.20-21). Samuel informs Saul that his rebellion is like divination and his arrogance like idolatry.

The last statement should give Christians pause. When we rebel against the command of God, we are behaving like the forces of darkness, and Satan, who led the first rebellion. When we inflate our ego and take the glory that belongs to God, we are in essence worshipping ourselves and guilty of idolatry. In one decision Saul lost his perpetual and eternal throne. Instead, his throne is now the eternal throne of David. As Christians, we must be diligent to avoid the colossal mistakes of the Israelites and Saul. If we follow in their steps we will reject our divine purpose for something that will fade away.

## 2 Samuel

The book of 2 Samuel surrounds the kingship of David. David is the model for messiah. While David is the king that expanded the borders of the kingdom to their furthest reaches, he also had his own personal issues. David’s relationship with Bathsheba and his intentional use of his power to murder Uriah was his greatest downfall. As a parent, David was highly passive.

In 2 Samuel 13 we read the story of how David's son Amnon forced himself upon his half-sister Tamar. David's other son Absalom became enraged at this event and murdered Amnon. In the midst of it all is David seemingly oblivious to all of the events going on in his family. Absalom is banished from the kingdom. Eventually, David allows Absalom to return to the kingdom, but is unaware of Absalom's desire for the throne.

Despite the major mistakes made by David, God gives him an incredible honor. God refers to David as, "A man after my own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). The honor of being called one after God's own heart is a tremendous blessing. Such a statement prompts me to ask the question, "What is it about David that made him one after God's own heart?" As I search the stories of 2 Samuel I am drawn to two distinct traits that show themselves time and again.

The first trait of David that I believe made him one after God's own heart was that David had a deep reverence for God. The deep abiding reverence for God is seen in the account of David's dancing in his underwear before the people, as the Ark of the Covenant enters Jerusalem. David worships God unencumbered with no regard to the opinions of others (2 Samuel 6:12-19). Not only does David worship God with reckless abandon, but David also embodies an attitude of gratitude toward the favor of God (2 Samuel 7:18-29). God communicates his desire to make David's kingdom great, but also guarantees that David will also have a descendant on the throne. This is the moment when God tells David messiah will come from him. Rather, than respond with entitlement David, makes note of God's condescension into the life of his servant.

The second trait that I believe David had that made him one after God's own heart was a consistent internal ethic that guided his life. David had a strong sense of what were appropriate responses of a righteous king, and the Bible reader encounters those responses regardless of the circumstance. When David hears that Saul and Jonathan are dead and learns that the messenger killed Saul, David strikes the messenger down for touching the anointed of God (2 Samuel 1). When David learns of Abner's death at the hands of Joab, he mourns for him, because Abner was righteous even though he was an enemy leading the civil war (2 Samuel 3:26-39). When David learns that the son of Saul, Ish-bosheth has been murdered, and the men who killed him bring Ish-boseth head to David, David cuts off their heads and returns Ish-boseth head to its body for proper burial (2 Samuel 4). David also showed mercy to Jonathan's son who had a disability

in his feet. David allows Mephibosheth to dine at his table his whole life because of David's covenant with his father, Jonathon (2 Samuel 9). Throughout all of 2 Samuel David has a strong internal moral compass that directs his behavior prompting him to act compassionately or justly, when the circumstances dictated such behavior to be difficult.

## I Kings

In 1 Kings God appears to Solomon two times. The first time God appeared and spoke to Solomon was in a dream was at Gibeon. It is this moment when God asks Solomon for the desire of his heart. Solomon asks for wisdom. God is impressed with the request and gives Solomon wisdom, and adds notoriety, fame, and wealth. The vision gives Solomon impetus to construct the first temple. After finishing the construction of the temple Solomon brings the Ark of the Covenant into the temple and consecrates it and the people. After the sacrifices of dedication are made, God appears to Solomon a second time. God promises Solomon a perpetual kingdom as he did for David. God also includes the warning that if Solomon follows and worships other God's the Israelite nation will be cut off by God.

1 Kings 11 tells us that Solomon had many wives and that these wives were not Jewish. Because they were foreign wives, they had foreign gods, and they turned Solomon's heart away from YHWH. Solomon builds alters and monuments to the false gods of his wives' even though God revealed himself to Solomon in dream. The gods that Solomon erected alters two illustrate a larger spiritual battle.

### **Ashtoreth ~**

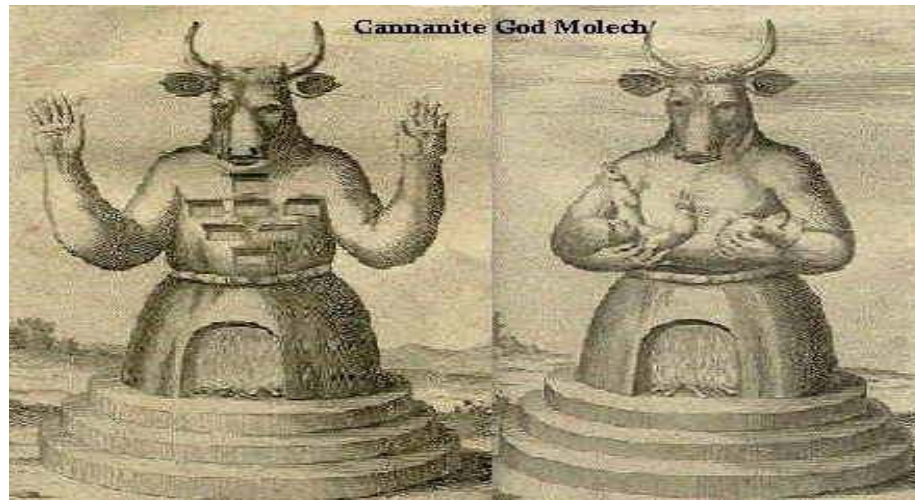
Is the female consort of Baal, she is associated as the moon goddess or "queen of the heavens".

In Assyrian culture she is the Goddess of love and war. Ashtoreth worship involved ritual sexual behavior, temple prostitutions. Ashtoreth followers would worship at Ashtera 'poles'.

### **Molech or Milcom ~**

Molech worship involved child sacrifice by the parents. The god was often called Moloch, but the writers of the Bible purposefully used the vowels of the word Bosheth~ meaning shame. Its base grammatical structure is translated as “the king”.

Here is a picture of Molech



### **Chemosh~**

Chemosh is a Moabite god whose name translates as “the destroyer”. Scripture refers to Satan as the destroyer. Chemosh is the devil. The reason Ruth was favored by Boaz and God is because she abandoned the devil worship of her family and sought worship of the true God with Naomi. Chemosh worship involved ritual human sacrifice. 1 Kings 11:7 says that Solomon built an alter to Chemosh on the east mountain of Jerusalem. That mountain east of Jerusalem is the Mount of Olives.

It seems to me that a larger spiritual battle is going on. Satan took a shot at God, by leading astray the anointed king of YHWH, a king anointed with the Wisdom of God. It is significant that Jesus ascends to heaven on the Mt. of Olives. For at his ascension, Jesus, kicks Satan out of heaven so that he can no longer accuse the faithful, and he takes his seat at the right hand of the Father (Rev 12). When Jesus returns he will enter the world at the Mt. of Olives. Clearly, God took Solomon’s fall personally. Christ sent Satan a clear message, “You think you won, I am going to ascend from the spot where an alter was built to you. I have already defeated death and

broke the curse you caused. Then when I get to heaven, I am going to take the keys of Death and Hell from you, and kick you out of heaven so you can no longer accuse the saints of God. When I return to finish the job, I am going to come back to the spot where an altar was dedicated to you, because I am God, and I get the final word.” Thanks be to God for this very good news!

## Obadiah

Our first introduction to Obadiah is in I Kings 18. We meet Obadiah and learn that he is over the household of Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab and Jezebel are the king and queen of Israel, who do not worship YHWH. In fact, Jezebel has made an effort to murder the priests of God. Because of Obadiah’s position in the royal house he has the capacity to hide away 100 priests of God in caves, despite the danger to himself. Obadiah meets Elijah and tells King Ahab the location where Elijah is found. Obadiah is placed by God in a critical spot to protect the people of God in a time of imminent danger. Because of his faithfulness to God, God sends Obadiah on another mission, to prophecy to his people Edom.

The book of Obadiah is the author’s prophetic word to his people. Edom, which means ‘red’, were cousins of the Jewish people. Edom traces itself back to Esau, Jacob’s older twin brother. There was always some conflict between Jacob and Esau and it seems that the family dynamics have moved down to their progeny. Obadiah, an Edomite himself, is sent by God to speak against the Edomites that will support the Babylonians in their conquest of Judah and the city of Jerusalem. God is not happy that the Edomites will aid and relish in the destruction of their cousins at the hands of Babylon.

It seems that Obadiah, the man and his book, stand as an example in Scripture that God wants his people to take care of each another and get each other’s back. The life of Obadiah is an example to us that sometimes, God will place everyday folk in extraordinary circumstances to protect his people. Many Congregational churches were stops along the Underground Railroad during slavery. Another example of this principle is the story of Corrie Ten Boom and her family in the book, *The Hiding Place*. Most recently is the story of made known in the movie “Hotel Rwanda”. Each is an example of God calling someone to protect his people. The prophetic

work of Obadiah suggests that God expects his people to look out for each other. What a timely message for the church of God and the Jewish state today.

## 2 Kings

The book of 2 Kings covers the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah from the end of the ministry of Elijah the prophet to the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians. Our focus will be on 2 Kings 17. In this particular chapter the author discusses the reasons for the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel at the hands of the Assyrians. The summation of the chapter is that Israel worshiped other gods. YHWH's instructions were specific to Moses, Joshua, the Judges, Saul, David, and Solomon, do not worship any other god's except YHWH god. God specifically said that if the people and the leaders worshiped another god/s then destruction would come their way. Once Israel and Judah engaged in idolatry, God warned them through the prophets to stop. 2 Kings illustrates that God means what he says.

The Assyrians remove the people from Israel and take them to Assyria, only to replace them with Assyrians. The problem is that the Assyrians do not worship YHWH, so God sends lions to devour the people. Recognizing that the new inhabitants do not know the god of the land, the Assyrian king sends a priest to teach the people about what the god of the land requires. Even after Israel is destroyed, God desires to reveal himself to the new inhabitants of the land. In some ways it is a foreshadowing of the move of the Gospel from the Jewish church to the gentile church. I believe the particular episode also illuminates for the reader Gods' desire for all of humanity to know him and worship him.

However, the new inhabitants have the same issues as Israel and Judah; they are unable to devote themselves to God alone. The new inhabitants like the people of Israel worship God and other gods as well. Realizing this, YHWH uses the offspring of the new inhabitants as a moment to reveal his plan through Christ. The children that result from the Jewish inhabitants of Samaria and the people brought in from Assyria are called 'Samaritans'. In the New Testament Samaritans are considered half-breed rats, reminding the Jews of Jesus day of the destruction of the northern kingdom and the Assyrian occupation.

In John 4 Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus breaks two specific social norms of the day, he talks to a woman and he talks to a Samaritan. As shocking as Jesus' actions

are, they do not match his message. Jesus talks to the women and Jacob's well. She tells him that the Samaritan worship on their mountain near the well. That mountain is Mt. Gerizim, the very mountain where some of the tribes of Israel were commanded to pronounce blessing upon the people as they entered the promise land. The opposite mountain was where some tribes had to pronounce curses. The blessing and the curses surround Israel worship of YHWH. Jesus tells the women that the day will come when where a person worships, Mt Gerizim or Jerusalem, will not matter. Why? Because the place has not been able to prohibit the people of Israel, the people of Judah, and the Assyrian interlopers from worshipping false God's. Rather Jesus tells the woman that the day has arrived that God will be worshiped in spirit and in truth.

The father's initiative, the sufficiency of Jesus' blood, and the power of the Holy Spirit, allow the Christians to do what no one has been able to do on their own— be devoted to God and not commit idolatry. Our devotion to Father matters and is important to him. What a great God we worship who allows us to do what his early people could not.

### Jonah

The story of Jonah illustrates that God desires to extend repentance to everyone. Jonah also illustrates that if God places a task on a person, he or she had better make good on the task. There is, however, more to the story of Jonah. In Matthew 12:38-42 the religious leaders of the day harassed Jesus, demanding a sign to prove that he is Messiah. Jesus responds by saying that the only sign the leaders will get is the sign of Jonah.

The sign of Jonah is a reference to Jonah's three days in the belly of a fish. By citing Jonah, Jesus tells the religious leaders of the day that they will see Jesus' death and his resurrection. Jonah is a prophetic book. Jesus goes on to say that at least the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, where as the religious leaders of Jesus' day were so stiff-necked that they would see the resurrection of the Christ, and remain in their unbelief. Therefore, the people of Nineveh by their repentance will condemn the religious leader in Jesus' day.

Examining Jonah 2:1-10, the prayer of Jonah is prophetic. When reading the prayer Jonah calls out from Sheol, the place where the souls of the dead were held in Jewish theology. Jonah was not in Sheol, Jonah was in the belly of a fish. The line is a direct reference to Jesus' descent in Hades/Sheol to reveal himself as Christ to the faithful that had died. The line, "But you have

brought up my life from the pit, O 'Lord my God.'" The statement is a direct reference to the resurrection. The prayer of Jonah in the fish is a prophetic foreshadowing to the resurrection. Moreover, the message of repentance to the Ninevites is a foreshadowing of the Gospel message taken to the gentiles.

So what? The prophetic work of Jonah matters because it elucidates a god that is very intentional about his activities. Moreover, it shows that God is clear about what he intends to do. There is no guessing as to what YHWH god intends to do with his messiah for his creation. In our life, the promise of eternal life is the more reliable than any government, person, or idea because it is a promise that Christ has guaranteed with his life.

### Amos

Amos is the first in a long line of the disturbing prophets. I use the descriptor "disturbing" because that is ultimately what he's trying to accomplish. He's doing his best to answer the call that God gave him as he was managing his flocks, and he does so *disturbingly*. Amos was just another guy trying to mind his own business. He was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees.

I'd like to have a conversation with him just to see what he'd think about how we do things today. Amos didn't know about Jesus or Christians, or how we would act in today's world. All he saw was what was happening to his people, the Jews, more than seven hundred years before Jesus' public ministry of healing the sick and feeding the hungry took place. It's to that public ministry to which we now turn.

For the past few months, Bruce has been walking through the Bible describing where we could see Jesus or the Holy Spirit working in the Hebrew Scriptures; as we go along on Route 66, 66 books of the Bible in 66 weeks, we can see how Jesus' ministry is part of a long line of God's saving work for the world. Amos is not prophesying the destruction of the world in the eschatological sense, that is, in the end times, or Armageddon. Amos is prophesying about the coming exile of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. He is literally telling the people there that if they don't mend their perverse and deceptive ways then God is going to send armies in to blow them up, and that is exactly what happens around the year 740 B.C. during the first Assyrian captivity of the Northern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom lasts more

than a century longer without going into captivity, but they too eventually get carted off to Babylon.

This is in the cultural memory of the Jews by the time that Jesus starts his ministry in Galilee seven centuries later. Amos is read by all Jews in Jesus' day, and Jesus remembers Amos when he works his loving way into the lives of people all across the world. Amos shouts a resounding, "YES," to justice and righteousness, and Jesus hears that "YES" and adds more to it. ... Yes, much more - Jesus' life and ministry is the enactment of God's demands through the prophets, including especially Amos. God tries and tries to get the people to, "seek good and not evil, that [they] may live," and says, "seek me and live; but don't seek Bethel, and don't enter into Gilgal; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing."

Bethel and Gilgal were places where the citizens of the Northern Kingdom of Israel went to offer their sacrifices and their burnt offerings. They were the places where God had encountered Israel in the past during their long walks together through history, and God says not to go there because they're about to be destroyed by these raging fire bombs of a furious God. The Jews of the Northern Kingdom thought that they were really doing what God wanted for them, but Amos reveals that God doesn't care about those burnt offerings and sacrifices. Here is one of the gems of Amos, and you have to look deep to see it. Through all the destruction and havoc that Amos proclaims, God still pushes to show how the whole time that Israel shared a covenant with YHWH, throughout all the ages, God never wanted any of these sacrifices as much as the wholehearted faithfulness and love of the community of Jews with whom God had walked. In Amos, God's desire is truly revealed as that of not requiring sacrifice, but of doing love, justice and righteousness.

Now, the question I'm about ask is not rhetorical. I'd like to know how we as a community will answer Jesus' call to minister to the poor. How do we, as Christians, seek God? How do we seek good and not evil in our community today?

~ preached and written by Grant Eubanks

## Joel

An outline of the book of Joel proceeds as follows:

### **1:1-13: A natural disaster as a result of Israel's disobedience**

**1:14-20: Consecrate a fast**

**2:1-11: The day of the Lord**

**2:12-14: God is Gracious**

**2:15-17: Consecrate a fast**

**2:18-27: God responds with revival**

**2:28-29: God responds with the Holy Spirit-Pentecost prophecy**

**2:30-32: The day of the Lord**

**3:1-17: The judgment of nations**

**3:18-21: Vindication of God's people**

Joel is a book that sounds like something out of a current newspaper. America has had an uptick in bizarre natural disasters. We need to consecrate a fast to have God fix what we have broken. We need to do the fast because the day of the Lord is at hand. If we fast, God is gracious to us and could respond with revival and another outpouring of the Holy Spirit, like the day of Pentecost. We need to do this because the day of the Lord is at hand. When the day of the Lord begins God will judge the nations. This section of Joel requires deeper examination.

Believe it or not the Jewish nation has a Thanksgiving Holiday; we in the United States were not the first to invent it. The Jewish Thanksgiving falls between late September and October. The holiday was one of the three holidays that required every Jewish man to come to Jerusalem and celebrate (Exodus 23:16-17). The Festival of Booths, or Sukkot, is referred to as the festival of Ingathering and it celebrated the harvest. Biblically, the harvest is an important image for God's redemption of the world. In Joel three, Joel makes a reference to the great Harvest of God (Joel 3:13-14, Revelation 14:14-20).

Swing the sickle,

for the harvest is ripe.

Come, trample the grapes,

for the winepress is full

and the vats overflow—

so great is their wickedness!"

<sup>14</sup> Multitudes, multitudes  
in the valley of decision!

For the day of the LORD is near  
in the valley of decision.

I believe God gave Joel a vision of the Harvest of Souls at the end of time. I believe that in the celebration of Sukkot, God is preparing the people of God for the ultimate Festival of Ingathering, and that is some very Good News.

### Isaiah

Out of all the prophetic literature the book of Isaiah contains more messianic prophecies about Jesus than any other book. It is interesting that Isaiah contains 66 chapters and the Bible has 66 books. I do not know if that means anything, but it is more than pure coincidence. I have made a list of all the prophecies in Isaiah about Jesus, as well as some prophetic words that are important. Here is that list.

### **Prophetic Passages from Isaiah**

**Is 2:1-4:** A prophecy concerning Gods' ultimate redemption of the world through Jacob.

**\*Is 3:1-12:** God's judgment against a nation starts by removing godly-leadership

**Is 6:3:** Isaiah receives a vision of the throne of God. (Ez 11-14, Rev 4:8)

**Is 7:10-16:** 1<sup>st</sup> prophecy concerning Jesus and Mary

**Is 9:1-9:** Jesus' ministry started in Galilee, John's gospel talks about Jesus as the light (Jn 3:16-21).

**Is 11:1-10:** A description of messiah and his ministry~ the seven gifts of the spirit v.2.

**\*Is 14:1-22:** Babylon the nation represents the kingdom of Satan in Scripture. Verses 12-15 describes Satan's fall as the angel Lucifer which parallels his defeat at the hands of Jesus at the ascension (Rev 12, Rev 18)

**Is 25:6-12:** Description of the messianic banquet/ marriage feast of the Lamb. (Mt. 22:1-14, Rev. 19:7-19)

**Is 26:17-19:** Prophecy concerning the resurrection of the dead.

**Is 26:20-27:1:** A Prophecy concerning the destruction of Satan (Job 41, Rev 20:1-10)

**Is 28: 16-18:** a prophecy concerning Jesus as the cornerstone and his ability to defeat death. (Ps 118:21-23, Mt 21:-41-43, Eph 2:20, 1 Pe 2:6-7)

**Is 35:** Specifically v. 5-10 discuss the work and results of messiah

**Is 40:1-11:** a prophetic word concerning the justice of messiah, also found in the Handel's Messiah

**\*Is 40:27-31:** Rising up on eagles wings.

**Is 42:1-9:** A prophetic word about Jesus silence as the Lamb of God, a 'covenant' for the peoples to bring people out of the 'prison' of Hades and death.

**Is 49:1-13:** Jesus in Revelation 1:9-16 has a shaped two-edged sword come out of his mouth in the vision of John.

**Is 49:14-16:** the first verses speak to the crucifixion of Jesus. 24-26... "I will contend with the one who contends with you" a prophecy about Jesus' dealings with Satan.

**Is 52:13-53:** The suffering servant, Jesus is the Lamb of God.

**Is 55:6-13:** A prophecy concerning Jesus as the Incarnate Word of God accomplishing its task, (Jn 1) and the written word of God accomplishes its task because it was spoken by the Incarnate word. V. 12 is a Palm Sunday song about Jesus as the messiah accomplishing his task.

**Is 56:1-8:** the promise of heaven (name and the house).

**\*Is 58:1-12:** Isaiah's prophetic word on the desires of God's heart

**Is 60:1-9:** A prophecy concerning the magi and their conviction that Jesus is the light of the world.

**Is 61:1-9:** Jesus' mission statement, Lk 4:14-19

**Is 62:10-12:** The name of messiah is given.

**Is 65:17-25:** The new heavens and new earth. (Rev 21)

When one read the passages it is clear that the life, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus satisfies the conditions for him to be messiah. In the end either Isaiah got a glimpse of Jesus, or he did not get a glimpse of messiah at all. Our answer to as to what Isaiah saw makes all the difference in the world.

### Hosea

The prophet Hosea delivers his message primarily to the northern kingdom of Israel. In chapter one we learn that God asks Hosea to take a harlot for a wife. God asks this of Hosea so that when his wife commits adultery, Hosea can prophesy to the people of Israel from his place of pain. Hosea's wife is a prophetic representative for the nation of Israel. Israel's worship of other gods, is akin to the adultery in the heart of YHWH.

The worship of other gods is a consistent theme in the prophets. I believe Hosea has pinpointed the source of the problem, Hosea 4:1-6, and 6:6 speak of knowledge. The specific phrase, "my people perish for a lack of knowledge" hones our attention to the malady. The prophet is clear that God wants us to have knowledge of him and that without we are destroyed.

When we speak of knowledge we must grasp that the Hebrew understanding of knowledge is different than the Greco/roman understanding of knowledge. For the Jew, knowledge involved a holistic way of knowing, and specifically, knowing God. To know God is to know him with our mind, our spirits, our emotions, and our physical being. The Greeks divided all of these facets of ontology into different categories. We Westerners are products of the Greco/roman intellectual heritage and we place aspects of our humanity into neat boxes, rather than consider the whole.

When the Bible speaks of knowledge it involves the mind, but the rational is superseded by the relational. Knowing God is about being in relationship. I had a professor in seminary that did not believe in God. This professor could talk forever on the subject of God, and could talk endlessly about what different theologians had said about god, he did not *know* God. So, how do we know God?

We know God and grow in our relationship in many ways. Scripture reading, experience, prayer, the natural world, and even observing the lives of others are all ways in which we know God. None of the various ways are sufficient in and of themselves; rather, we must combine all of the ways of knowing, in order for our relationship with God to flourish.

The goal of knowing is an intimate knowing. For an individual to say that they *know* someone, can range from a brief friendship acquaintance to an inmate lover. The Biblical paradigm of knowing God is that of a spouse or lover. How can we human beings, finite and sinful, know the eternal and holy God?

2 Corinthians says,

“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.” (NIV)

Jesus is the light of God. To know God, one must know Jesus. God has given us the face of Christ, so that in looking at the life, person, and work of Jesus, we might know God. Clearly, the Holy Spirit is involved in gaining this ‘knowledge’ but it is the knowledge of Jesus that makes the difference.

On the day I graduated with my doctorate I was very emotional. The degree was a long arduous process filled with obstacles in my personal and professional life. The dissertation took two years and was frustrating. The worship service prior to the graduation ceremony was meaningful for me. On the day I celebrated one of my greatest life successes, the worship team played the song “Knowing You”. I burst into tears, for God reminded me that day, while the achievement was significant it was not as important as the glory of *knowing* God.

God wants us to know him and be known by him, there simply is no greater thing.

2 Peter 3:18, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” (NIV)

## Micah

The book of Micah chapters 4:1-3 is a direct quote from Is 2:1-4. Micah is citing his mentor, Isaiah. Micah needs to make a reference to the great prophet, because he (Micah) is an outsider. As a prophet, Isaiah is able to deliver a prophetic warning to the religious and political elite of Judah and Israel, because he is a member of the elite. Micah does not have that entrée, rather, Micah comes from the rural area of Judah, not the city of Jerusalem. The oracle of Micah would be similar to someone from Iowa, or Kansans, or Nebraska, delivering a harsh word of judgment to the elite of Wall St. and Independence Ave. Yet, that is exactly what Micah does.

In chapter three, Micah delivers God’s judgment on the leaders of the two nations. The leadership has not taken care of those who need their protection and help. Rather, the leadership has used their power and privilege to benefit themselves at the expense of the people for whom they have been charged. Against the backdrop of poor leadership, Micah delivers one of the most recognizable words in all of Scripture.

***Micah 6:8~He has shown you, O mortal, what the Lord requires of you. To do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.***

It seems that a key to godly leadership is to have God’s sense of justice concerning a situation, yet, that justice needs to be held in tension with mercy. Only God has the capacity to truly exercise justice and mercy in appropriate measure, but the people who seek after God’s heart need to try bringing those characteristics into their everyday lives. The work does not stop with justice and mercy, it seems that the only way to truly imbibe a life with justice and mercy is to carry oneself with divine humility. Humility is seeing ourselves the way God sees us, and it requires the Holy Spirit to reveal our inmost self to our conscious mind. True godly humility gives justice and mercy a platform from which to work.

The beauty of Micah 6:8 is that Jesus is the embodiment of God’s desire for justice, mercy and humility. As we grow in Christ, Micah’s words grow in us.

## Nahum

Hebrews 10:31 tells us that, “It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of a living God.” In the book of Nahum we read a prophetic word given against the nation of Assyria and its people. All of us from time to time, ponder the moment when God delivers his judgment on people who have done us wrong. Nahum delivers that message to a people who destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and have made the oppression of their neighbors a national pastime.

Nahum 3:16 describes the Assyrian nation, and specifically the people of Nineveh, as a plague of locusts that consume everyone and everything. Their traders are as numerous as the stars and they leave a path of destruction in their wake. Verse nineteen promises that there will be no relief from God’s judgment upon the nation of Assyria and all the peoples that have felt their heavy hand will rejoice at the destruction of the Assyrian nation.

I wonder what the full judgment of God is like? In Nahum 3:5 God describes the judgment he will visit on Assyria.

“I will lift up your skirts over your face, and show to the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your disgrace. I will throw filth (dung) on you and make you vile and set you up to be a spectacle.”

It is a terrible thing to fall into God’s judgment. Nahum assures us that God does judge individuals and nations. When God does lower judgment upon an individual or nation it is not pretty. The judgment of God is real and the people of God ought to tremble in fear for themselves and for people who do not know God.

The message of Nahum shows us a side of God we are not accustomed to viewing. Yet, we must embrace the side of God’s justice no matter how terrifying, for if God is to be loving, he must be just. Ultimately, the love and justice of God reside in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus will display God’s justice upon his return; in the meantime we truly see the love of God in Christ. The God we worship loves his creation so much that he would rather dispense our punishment upon himself, than release his judgment upon on us. This is truly a loving God.

### Zephaniah

The prophet Zephaniah delivers an oracle of judgment against the nation of Judah for worship of Baal, Molech, and Chemosh (See Zeph 1:4-5, 1 Kings). The worship of other gods

was a persistent problem for which Zephaniah takes aim. The battle for the hearts and minds of the Israelites is a personal issue to God. YHWH chose Israel for himself and they rejected their covenant by worshipping another god. Not just any God, but Satan himself. Zephaniah is a continuation of an ongoing battle between the Prince of Darkness and the Prince of Peace.

A look back to Genesis 3 shows a moment in which Satan tricks God's prized creation into disobeying God and sinning. The Fall of humanity places YHWH in position where he has no alternative but to remove his prized possession from his midst. God has a dilemma. The adversary, Satan, perpetually strives to drive a wedge between God and his prized possession—the people of God. YHWH must create a solution that undoes the previous damage inflicted by Satan in the garden, and at the same time eliminates the capacity of the false god to come between YHWH and his people.

Zephaniah 1:7, "Be silent before the Lord, God! For the day of the Lord is near, for the Lord has prepared a sacrifice, he has consecrated his guests".

The Sacrifice prepared by the Lord is the solution to all of God's conundrums. I wonder who, or what is the sacrifice, and who are the guests. Zephaniah is a prophetic word about the Pascal Lamb. The nature of sin requires that the shedding of blood be required. The sacrifice had to be perfect, and it had to have the capacity to take on all sin for all time. Most Temple sacrifices could only remove the burden of sin for one person, for a given instance. Enter the sacrifice of God— Jesus.

The angel Gabriel tells Joseph that he was to give the baby in Mary's womb the name Jesus, Salvation, because he will save his people from their sins. Jesus is YHWH's solution to the eternal grudge match between himself and the Devil. It is difficult to fully grasp a God who sends his son to die. The angelic host sing, "Glory to God in the highest" as a celebration of a baby whose sole purpose is death.

We know that Jesus is the sacrifice prepared by God, but who are the guests? We are. God has prepared a perfect lamb, so that the angel of death will Passover the lentil of the universe, and he has invited the human race for the eternal Seder meal. When God's work is done what will the sacrifice accomplish? Restoration. Zephaniah 3:14-20 tells us of the

restoration of God. Restoration, for God is a return of the relationship God had with his prized possession at the very beginning.

A final word about the God of Zephaniah. Chemosh, Moloch, and Satan are a false god that require their devotees to sacrifice their children in order to worship him. Zephaniah's God sacrifices his Son so that his devotees can worship him, the difference is life changing.

Habakkuk