

## WEEK THIRTY-TWO INTRODUCTION

The prophets Habakkuk, Joel, and Jeremiah provide the prophetic bridge into the fall of Judah to the Babylonian empire. Habakkuk ministered around the middle to late 600s BC. He prophesied during the wilting of the Assyrian empire and the rise of the Babylonians. Joel, while much more difficult to date precisely, serves as a prophet of the Lord during the 7th century BC (most likely). Jeremiah, the “weeping prophet,” exerts his prophetic office during the most traumatic season of Judah’s existence. His ministry spans from the reign of King Josiah (627 BC) to sometime after the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC). Each of these prophet books carries its own emphases and themes, yet each takes the occasion of present suffering to direct his readers’ attention to the future outworking of the plans of God.

### KEY SCRIPTURE

*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD’s glory as the water covers the sea. — Habakkuk 2:14*  
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### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**Habakkuk prays in Habakkuk 1:2-4 and 12-17. Describe the contents of his prayers. How does he pray and what does he ask God for?**

**Habakkuk 2 is overlooked in terms of significance. 2:4 demonstrates what Paul will bring out in his letters. Read Romans 1:16-17 and Galatians 3:10-18. What point does the Apostle Paul draw from this text in Habakkuk?**

**Joel begins with vivid imagery of a locust invasion. For a culture and economy based upon what happens in the farming fields, swarm after swarm of locusts would be devastating. Under the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, Joel leverages the immediate circumstances to bring home a spiritual message. He issues a commanding invitation to *repentance*. Present fear, suffering, and instability point to the**

greater Day of Judgment in the future, therefore set your hearts right before God. Read Joel 1:14. How does Joel tell the people to respond? How do you think Christians should respond in our current times of conflict, fear, and instability? What should our message to our neighbors be?

God's call to repentance resounds in Joel 2:12-13, *turn to me with all your heart... Tear your hearts, not just your clothes...* Joel distinguishes between outward "repentance," which is a farce, and inward repentance of the heart. How would you draw the distinction? Examine your own life and heart. Is your turning from sin to Christ only outward and superficial? Or, is it true, inward, arising from a changed heart?

Look at Jeremiah 1:4-5. When did God's plan and purpose for Jeremiah begin? See Galatians 1:15 for Paul's own statement. Read Ephesians 1:4. Meditate on God's grace directed toward you before the foundation of the world. How do you respond to the idea of God knowing and choosing you even though He knows everything you would ever say or do?

What is God's indictment of His people in Jeremiah 2:13? What are the "two evils"? Can you see the same two at work today? Examine your own life.

God's testimony throughout the Scriptures is that the gravest issue that must be dealt with is the sinful human heart. Jeremiah 4 doubles down on that reality. This truth, the seriousness of sin, is something we must reckon with if we will know, follow, and enjoy Christ Jesus. Jeremiah pleads with the people of Jerusalem to change their hearts, cutting away the rot of sin, see 4:4. He cries to them to wash themselves. Consider 4:14, *Wash the evil from your heart, Jerusalem, so that you will be delivered.* Read 1 Corinthians 6:11. How is this washing done?

Despite the severity of the Lord's response to the sin of Judah, describe the hope found in Jeremiah 16:14-15.

**BE A DOER OF THE WORD**

“‘This is what the LORD says: The wise person should not boast in his wisdom; the strong should not boast in his strength; the wealthy should not boast in his wealth. But the one who boasts should boast in this: that he understands and knows me—that I am the LORD, showing faithful love, justice, and righteousness on the earth, for I delight in these things.’ This is the LORD’s declaration.” **-Jeremiah 9:23-24 CSB**

**What you boast about is what is most important and exciting to you. What is your boast? What do you celebrate most?**