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MINOR
PROPHETS

The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament

Prophets were men raised up of God in times of declension and apostasy in Israel. They were primarily revivalists and patriots, speaking on behalf of God to the heart and conscience of the nation. The prophetic messages have a twofold character: first, that which was local and for the prophet's time; secondly, that which was predictive of the divine purpose in future.

The terms **Major Prophets** and **Minor Prophets** are simply a way to divide these books.

The **Major Prophets** are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

The **Minor Prophets** are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The Minor Prophets are also sometimes called *The Twelve*.

The Major Prophets are described as "major" because their books are longer and their content has broad, even global implications. The Minor Prophets are described as "minor" because their books are shorter (although Hosea and Zechariah are almost as long as Daniel) and the content is more narrowly focused. That does not mean the Minor Prophets are any less inspired than the Major Prophets. It is simply a matter of God choosing to reveal more to the Major Prophets than He did to the Minor Prophets.

Both the Major and Minor Prophets are usually among the least popular books of the Bible for Christians to read. This is understandable with the often unusual prophetic language and the seemingly constant warnings and condemnations recorded in the prophecies. Still, there is much valuable content to be studied in the Major and Minor Prophets. We read of Christ's birth in Isaiah and Micah. We learn of Christ's atoning sacrifice in Isaiah. We read of Christ's return in Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah. We learn of God's holiness, wrath, grace, and mercy in all of the Major and Minor Prophets. For that, they are most worthy of our attention and study.

Chronological Order of the Prophets

I. Prophets Before the Exile

(1) To Nineveh Jonah, 862 B.C.

(2) To the 10 tribes "Israel" Amos, 787 B.C. Hosea, 785-725 B.C. Obadiah, 887 B.C. Joel, 800 B.C.

(3) To Judah Isaiah, 760-698 B.C. Micah, 750-710 B.C. Nahum, 713 B.C. Habakkuk, 626 B.C. Zephaniah, 630 B.C.

II. Prophets During the Exile

Ezekiel, 595-574 B.C. Daniel, 607-534 B.C.

III. Prophets After the Exile

Haggai, 520 B.C. Zechariah, 520-518 B.C. Malachi, 397 B.C.

The Minor Prophets

The division of *major* and *minor* prophets come from the Old Testament. There are 17 books of prophecy in the Old Testament and they are divided into two groups: the long books (the major prophets) and the short books (the minor prophets).

The Minor Prophet books are:

1. **Hosea**
2. **Joel**
3. **Amos**
4. **Obadiah**
5. **Jonah**
6. **Micah**
7. **Nahum**
8. **Habakkuk**
9. **Zephaniah**
10. **Haggai**
11. **Zechariah**
12. **Malachi**

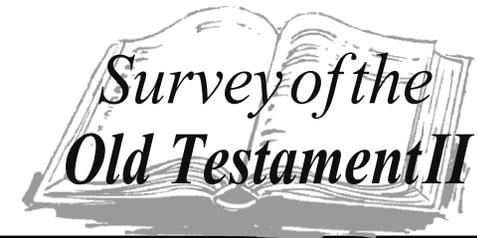
Minor Prophets--12 books

1. **Hosea**--Story of Hosea and his unfaithful wife, Gomer. Represents God's love and faithfulness and Israel's spiritual adultery. Israel will be judged and restored.
2. **Joel**--Proclaims a terrifying future using the imagery of locusts. Judgment will come, but blessing will follow.
3. **Amos**--He warned Israel of its coming judgment. Israel rejects God's warning.
4. **Obadiah**--A decree against Edom, a neighboring nation of Israel that gloated over Jerusalem's judgments. Prophecy of its utter destruction.
5. **Jonah**--Jonah proclaims a coming judgment upon Nineveh's people, but they repented and judgment was spared.
6. **Micah**--Description of the complete moral decay in all levels of Israel. God will judge but will forgive and restore.
7. **Nahum**--Nineveh has gone into apostasy (approx. 125 years after Jonah) and will be destroyed.
8. **Habakkuk**--Near the end of the kingdom of Judah, Habakkuk asks God why He is not dealing with Judah's sins. God says He will use the Babylonians. Habakkuk asks how God can use a nation that is even worse than Judah.
9. **Zephaniah**--The theme is developed of the Day of the Lord and His judgment with a coming blessing. Judah will not repent except for a remnant, which will be restored.
10. **Haggai**--The people failed to put God first by building their houses before they finished God's temple. Therefore, they had no prosperity.
11. **Zechariah**--Zechariah encourages the Jews to complete the temple. Many messianic prophecies.
12. **Malachi**--God's people are negligent in their duty to God. Growing distant from God. Moral compromise. Proclamation of coming judgment.

The Minor Prophets

Books and Themes

1. Hosea (14)	- <u>Spiritual Adultery</u>	Key Verse 1:2
2. Joel (3)	- <u>The Day of the LORD</u>	Key Verse 1:15
3. Amos (9)	- <u>National Accountability</u>	Key Verse 4:12
4. Obadiah (1)	- <u>The Destruction of Edom</u>	Key Verse 1:10
5. Jonah (4)	- <u>Obedience</u>	Key Verse 1:3
6. Micah (7)	- <u>Purest Religion</u>	Key Verse 5:2
7. Nahum (3)	- <u>The Destruction of Nineveh</u>	Key Verse 2:13
8. Habakkuk (3)	- <u>The Mystery of Providence</u>	Key Verse 1:5
9. Zephaniah (3)	- <u>God's Searching Judgment</u>	Key Verse 1:12
10. Haggai (2)	- <u>Working for God First</u>	Key Verse 2:4
11. Zechariah (14)	- <u>The Hope of the Future</u>	Key Verse 1:3
12. Malachi (3)	- <u>Ignorant Opposition</u>	Key Verse 3:16



AUTHOR

- Jonah - He is known as "**the runaway prophet.**"
- He was a prophet to the northern kingdom, Israel; but this book concerns his ministry to **Nineveh**, capital of the Assyrian empire.
- Jonah did not run from a *place*; he ran from a **Person!** (1 :3)

DATE

- Jonah's ministry dates ca. 784-772 B.C.
- He prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (see II Kings 14:23-25).

THEME

*"THE **MERCY** OF GOD"*

- This book is about more than a boat, a storm, a fish, a gourd, and a worm. It gives us a two-fold picture of the mercy of God.
- God's Mercy on **Repenting Sinners** (Nineveh)
 - Nineveh was a "*great city.*" - great in size, but also great in its sinfulness. (1:2)
 - God honored their repentance and had mercy on the worst of sinners. (2:4-10)
 - God's Mercy on a **Rebelling Saint** (Jonah)
 - The fish was sent not to *punish* Jonah, but to *preserve* him and bring him back to God. (1:17, 2:1)
 - Over and over, God in His mercy worked in the life of His unwilling child.

OUTLINE

- Jonah and the **Storm** (ch. 1)
- Jonah and the **Fish** (ch. 2)
- Jonah and the **City** (ch. 3)
- Jonah and the **Lord** (ch. 4)

KEY VERSE

"Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

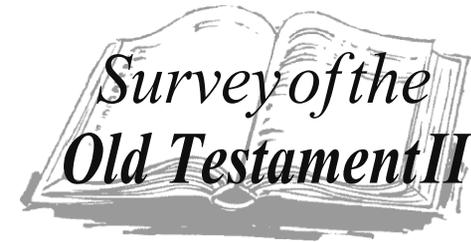
Jonah 3:2

SPECIAL FEATURES

- In this book, we see the **missionary** heart of God.
 - *God's love extends to all people, not just Israel.
 - *Jonah is the first **foreign** missionary sent from Israel.
 - *The central statement of the book is found in Jonah 2:9, "**Salvation is of the LORD.**"
- In this story, God "**prepared**" four things: a great fish, a gourd, a worm, and a wind.
- The book of Jonah is filled with many miracles, both physical and spiritual.

CHRIST IN THE BOOK

- Jonah is the only prophet in the O.T. to whom Christ likened Himself. He was a "**sign.**"
(See Mt. 12:39-41 & Lk. 11:29-32.)



AUTHOR

- Micah - his name means, "**Who is like Jehovah?**"
- This book is filled with questions, but it culminates with the great question in Micah 7:18, "*Who is a God like unto thee...?*" (Notice the play on Micah's name.)
- Micah was a prophet primarily to Judah and Jerusalem

DATE

- This book was written ca. 734-722 B.C.
- Micah was contemporary with **Isaiah**. Isaiah was probably older than Micah, and he likely ministered more among the upper class while Micah dealt more with the common people.

THEME

"PRESENT JUDGMENT BUT FUTURE BLESSING"

- I. Present Judgment -- due to the persistent unfaithfulness of God's people
 - Micah exposes the evils of God's people, particularly the corruption of her leaders (3:1-12).
- II. Future Blessing -- due to the unchanging faithfulness of God
 - Micah reveals the future kingdom (ch. 4) and the future King (ch. 5).

OUTLINE

- I. Imminent **Judgment Declared** (ch. 1-3)
- II. Ultimate **Blessing Promised** (ch. 4-5)
- III. Present **Repentance Pleaded** (ch. 6-7)

KEY VERSE

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy."

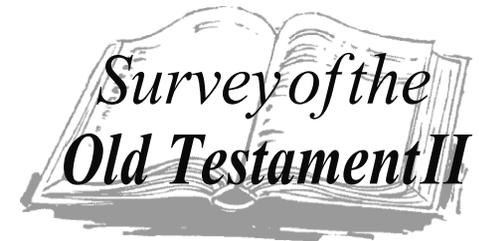
Micah 7:18

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Micah presents the Lord as being holy and just, yet full of compassion and mercy.
 - *God's holiness/justice - (1:2-4; 5:15; 7:16-17)
 - *God's compassion/mercy - (6:3-4; 7:7; 7:18-19)
- In Micah's day, the people performed outward displays of worship (i.e. sacrifices) but were sinful in their private lives. Micah showed them the essence of true religion is a personal walk with God. (See 6:7-8.)

CHRIST IN THE BOOK

- Christ is the smitten Judge of Israel. (5:1)
- Christ is the Ruler of Israel. (5:2)



RECOMMENDED READING & RESOURCES

Exploring the Scriptures, by John Phillips

Explore the Book, by J. Sidlow Baxter

Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament, by Irving L. Jensen

The Prophets of Israel, by Leon J. Wood

The Treasury of David (Book of Psalms), by C.H. Spurgeon

Our God and His Children (Psalm 1-13), by Clarence Sexton

His Way Is Perfect (Psalm 14-24), by Clarence Sexton

The Lord Is my Shepherd (Psalm 23), by Clarence Sexton

The Glory Due His Name (Psalm 25-37), by Clarence Sexton

The Conclusion of the Whole Matter - Vols. 1,2 (Ecclesiastes), by Clarence Sexton

Door of Hope (Hosea), by Clarence Sexton

Lord, Send a Revival (Habakkuk), by Clarence Sexton

World's Bible Handbook, by Robert T. Boyd

Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, by Merrill C. Tenney

Baker's Bible Atlas, by Charles F. Pfeiffer