

THE
—  —
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**

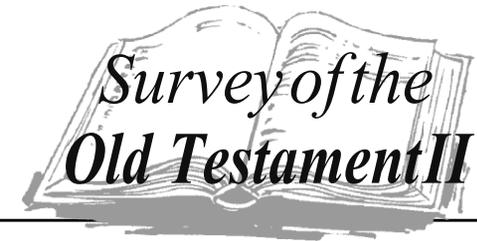
Minor Prophets--12 books

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

- Zephaniah - meaning, "**hidden/protected by Jehovah**"
- He ministered during the reign of Judah's last good king, King Josiah.
- It is likely that he was of royal blood.

DATE

- This book was written ca. 636-623 B.C.
- See II Kings 22-23 & II Chronicles 34-35 for the historical background of this time period.

THEME

*"THROUGH JUDGMENT TO **BLESSING**"*

- Zephaniah's two-fold message is seen by contrasting the beginning and ending of the book:
"I will utterly consume..." (1:2)
"I will make you a name and a praise..." (3:20)

IV. The **Fire** of Judgment

- Judah's present sin called for present judgment.
"The day of the LORD is at hand." (1:7, 14-18) This prophecy was given 50 years before Judah's fall.

V. The **Fulness** of Blessing

- Even in the midst of present judgment, God has a glorious end and purpose in view.
"The LORD hath taken away thy judgments." (3:15)
- Zephaniah was contemporary with **Jeremiah**,

OUTLINE

- I. Look **Within!** (1:1-2:3)
- II. Look **Around!** (2:4-3:8)
- III. Look **Beyond!** (3:9-20)

KEY VERSE

"And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil."

SPECIAL FEATURES

Zephaniah **1:12**

although Jeremiah evidently outlived him by many years. (See Jer. **1:2**)

- Zephaniah's message is marked by a tone of urgency for immediate action (1:14-15, 2:1-2). It is the prophet's role to awaken the unconcerned nation (1:12) by proclaiming the Word of God.

CHRIST IN THE BOOK

- Christ is the "**king of Israel**." (3:15)
- Christ is "*the LORD in the midst of thee.*"
He is in the midst to *judge* (3:5).
He is in the midst to *save* (3:15-17).



AUTHOR

- Haggai - (See 1:1, Ezra 5:1, 6:14)
- Haggai was contemporary with **Zechariah**.
- Haggai was born in captivity and went to Jerusalem in **the first return under Zerubbabel**.

DATE

- This book was written ca. 520 B.C.
- For the historical background, read Ezra 1-6.

THEME

*"BUILD THE **HOUSE**"*

I. The Indifference of God's People

- After **Cyrus** issued a decree for the Jews to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-4), a remnant of about 50,000 returned from the land of captivity under the leadership of Zerubbabel.
- They laid the foundation of the temple within two years, but then the work ceased due to opposition. For fourteen years the work was at a standstill. Then God used Haggai and Zechariah the prophets to stir the people to finish the work and *"build the house."*

II. The Message of the Prophet

- A. It is time to **build**. (1:2, 8)
- B. It is time to **consider**. (1:4-7)
- C. It is time to **be stirred up**. (1:14)
- D. It is time to **work**. (2:4)
- E. It is time to **believe God**. (2:7, 9, 22)

OUTLINE

- I. First Message - To Arouse (1:1-15)
- II. Second Message - To Support (2:1-9)
- III. Third Message - To Confirm (2:10-19)
- IV. Fourth Message - To Assure (2:20-23)

KEY VERSE

"Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD."

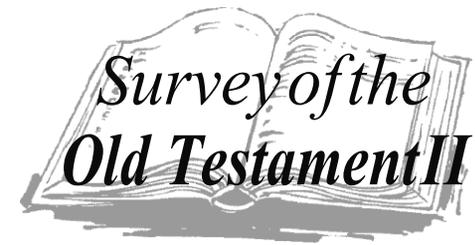
Haggai 1:8

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Key lessons learned from Haggai:
 1. A lesson about **blessing**. (1:9, 2:18-19)
 - *If we obey the Lord and take care of His work, He will take care of us. (Mt. 6:33)
 2. A lesson about **building**. (1:8)
 - *The only motive we should have in doing a work for God is to please and glorify Him.
 3. A lesson about **Bible preaching**. (1:13-14)
 - *The hearts of the people were stirred to obedience by the preaching of God's Word.

CHRIST IN THE BOOK

- Christ is the **"desire of all nations."** (2:7)
- The glory of this temple would be greater because the King of glory Himself would walk in this temple! (2:9)



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