

The Prophets
Falls International Baptist Institute
Classes Three and Four: Overview of the Minor Prophets

I. HOSEA

- A. Hosea is the first of the Minor Prophets and the sixth book of the Prophets.
- B. Hosea's name means "*Salvation*".
- C. Hosea was a prophet to the northern ten tribes (known as Israel after the Kingdom split). Remember that the nation of Israel split into the northern and southern kingdom. The northern ten tribes continue to be known as Israel, while the southern two tribes are called Judah. (Because Ephraim was the largest tribe in the northern kingdom, sometimes Israel is called Ephraim in the scriptures.)
- D. Hosea prophesied during the reigns of six kings in Israel from Zechariah to Hoshea. He ministered in Israel while Isaiah and Micah preached in Judah. Amos was also a younger prophet during Hosea's later years.
- E. Hosea's personal life and experience were used by God to illustrate His prophetic message to Israel. God told Hosea to marry a harlot named Gomer. Gomer was a picture of Israel who had committed adultery against God. While Gomer committed physical adultery against Hosea, Israel was committing spiritual adultery against God. Time and again, Hosea would demonstrate his faithfulness to Gomer in going after her and bringing her home. His message to Israel was that though Israel was an adulterous wife, Jehovah was a faithful Husband!
- F. We learn about four of God's attributes in this Book: God is Holy, Just, Loving, and Gracious. While God is holy and just, He is also loving and gracious. God must discipline us, but because of His endless love, He will ultimately save and restore His wayward people. Hosea 14:4 "*I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.*"

II. JOEL

- A. The prophet Joel was probably an early prophet to Judah and possibly lived during the time of Elisha.
- B. His book only has three chapters.
- C. The name Joel means "*Yahweh is God*".
- D. This Book is the seventh of the Prophets and the second of the Minor Prophets.
- E. We know that this book is a part of the scriptures because the Apostle Peter quoted from Joel 2 on the Day of Pentecost.
- F. In the immediate context of this book, we learn that Judah is devastated by a massive swarm of locusts. This invasion of locusts destroys everything—the fields of grain, the vineyards, the gardens and the trees.

Joel symbolically describes the locusts as a marching human army and views all this as a divine judgment coming against the nation for her sins.

- G. The Book of Joel speaks of two major events.
 - 1. The Invasion of Locusts.
 - 2. The Outpouring of the Spirit. The initial fulfillment of the outpouring of the Spirit is quoted by Peter in Acts 2 as having taken place at Pentecost. The complete fulfillment will take place at the beginning of the Tribulation. While Joel speaks of locusts, plagues, and famines; he prophesies about a far greater event that is yet to come known as “The Day of the LORD”. He ends his message of judgement upon Israel with promised of physical, spiritual, and national restoration.
- H. God’s mercy is revealed in Joel 2:25 *“And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.”*

III. AMOS

- A. Amos was a country farmer who was called of God to be a prophet. He was a herdsman and gatherer of sycamore fruit.
- B. His name literally means *“to lade, to burden, a burden bearer”*.
- C. Amos becomes a lesson to us that God not only uses priests and kings, but farmers and burden bearers in His holy work.
- D. Amos was from Judah, but he was sent to the northern tribes to prophesy.
- E. Amos ministered after Obadiah, Joel, and Jonah, but before Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah.
- F. The kingdom of Israel was very prosperous during Amos’s ministry. They had become self-sufficient and independent of God. Amos preached that God’s judgment was coming. Amaziah the priest along with the king of Israel urged Amos to go back home to Judah. But God’s judgment fell thirty years later just as he prophesied and Israel was brought into captivity by the Assyrians.
- G. While Amos prophesied against Israel, he also prophesied about other nations surrounding Israel.
- H. While Amos preached of judgment, he ends His Book with a message of hope as he speaks of the coming restoration of Israel under the Messiah’s reign during the Millennium.

IV. OBADIAH

- A. Obadiah is the only one-chapter Book in the Old Testament.
- B. The name Obadiah means *“Worshipper of Yahweh”*. His name also literally means *“Servant of the LORD”*. Obadiah was a very common Old Testament name; in fact, there are thirteen different Obadiah’s recorded in the Old Testament.
- C. Obadiah was called by God to prophesy against a people known as the Edomites. The Edomites were descendants of Esau who were bitter enemies of the Jewish nation. They lived in the mountainous region

southeast of Judah. When Israel was passing through the wilderness, the Edomites refused Moses' request to allow Israel to pass through their land. Many times throughout Jewish history, the Edomites fought against the children of God. Obadiah prophesied in verse 10 *"For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever."*

- D. The book of Obadiah ends with the words: *"and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S."*

V. JONAH

- A. The Book of Jonah is the true story of a real man whom God sent to a wicked city. Jonah was probably written by Jonah. This book can be outlined by the four words:
1. Chapter One: No!
 2. Chapter Two: Yes!
 3. Chapter Three: Repent
 4. Chapter Four: Why?
- B. Jonah was a prophet who lived at the same time Elisha did.
- C. His Biblical Ministry was spent entirely on foreign soil.
- D. Jesus recognized Jonah to be a prophet in Matthew 12:39 *"But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:"*. The Lord also used Jonah's name eight times in the Gospels.
- E. Nineveh was a wicked city. It was known as "the bloody city" and their wickedness had come before God. But while Nineveh was a pagan wicked city, they also had never had a prophet or a preacher. They had no gospel light of any kind. God sent Jonah to this wicked Assyrian city with a message that judgment was coming in forty days unless they repented! It is worth noting that God never called Nineveh wicked; instead He called them an exceeding great city. We learn that while God saw their wickedness and predicted judgment, He also saw the multitudes there who had no one to tell them about Him. Jonah hated Nineveh, and did not want to go. He rebelled against God. But God got him to Nineveh through the belly of a whale! This is not just a story or a parable. Jesus said *"For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."* We believe the Bible! When Jonah finally got to Nineveh and preached, the Revival that took place outran the preacher. The city was so large that it would take three days for a man to walk through it, but the entire city repented in one day at the preaching of Jonah!
- F. In chapter four, Jonah becomes bitter at the mercy of God that was revealed to these sinners.

VI. MICAH

- A. Micah is the eleventh of the seventeen prophetic books and the sixth of the twelve minor prophets.
- B. The prophet Micah was raised in Moresheth Gath about twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem.
- C. He was a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea.
- D. His ministry was both to the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.
- E. He predicted the Fall of Israel in Micah 1:6. He prophesied during the years surrounding the fall of Israel to the Assyrian Empire. He also states in the introduction of the book that he prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah.
- F. Micah's message is divided into three parts:
 - 1. He exposed the sins of his countrymen.
 - 2. He predicted the coming judgment of God.
 - 3. He prophesied of the future restoration of Israel during the Millennial Kingdom. The greatest prophecy in Micah is found in Micah 5:2 "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." This prophecy is of great significance as it predicted the birthplace of Jesus Christ seven hundred years before He was born. This verse also speaks of the Deity and Eternality of the Son of God.

VII. NAHUM

- A. The only thing we know about the prophet, Nahum, is what we read about him in the first verse of this three-chapter book: "*The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite*".
- B. The word Nahum means "*comfort*" and his message was a message of comfort to the southern kingdom of Judah.
- C. The book of Nahum is a prophecy against Nineveh. One hundred years after the prophet Jonah preached, God sent Nahum to warn Nineveh again that judgment was coming and that He was going to destroy the Assyrian nation along with their capital city, Nineveh. Fifty years later, the Babylonians rebelled against the Assyrians and completely destroyed Nineveh. In fact, God's judgement was so complete and severe that when Alexander the Great fought a battle near where Nineveh was, he did not even know that a city had been there. Nahum preached the destruction of Nineveh as well as the restoration of Judah. Memorize Nahum 1:7 "The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him."

VIII. HABAKKUK

- A. The name Habakkuk means “*One who embraces*”.
- B. Habakkuk lived in a time after the northern kingdom had been taken captive by Assyria.
- C. At the date of his book, the Babylonians had overthrown the Assyrians and became the world power. Babylon was reaching out in military campaigns and literally conquering the world. They were getting very close to Judah and Jerusalem. In spite of all this, Habakkuk’s countrymen were living in unrestrained wickedness. Judah had turned their back on God. Habakkuk questioned God as to why Judah’s sins are going unpunished by God. God revealed to Habakkuk that Babylon was going to be used by the LORD to bring chastisement upon Judah. He also reveals throughout this Book that while He uses the Chaldeans to overthrow Judah, one day His judgment will fall upon the Babylonians as well. Habakkuk is instructed in this book that “*the just shall live by his faith.*” Habakkuk teaches us that no matter how wicked our countrymen become; and no matter how God chooses to bring destruction to a nation that has opposed him, we, who are saved must live by faith. Faith is not tied to the stability or the righteousness of our nations. Faith is tied to the Promises of God and His Word!

IX. ZEPHANIAH

- A. The name Zephaniah means “*Yahweh Hides*”.
- B. The book of Zephaniah is the 36th book of the Old Testament, the 14th book of the Prophets, and the 9th of the 12 minor prophets.
- C. In Zephaniah 1:1, the author introduces himself as “*Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah.*” Zephaniah was the great great grandson of King Hezekiah. This makes him the only prophet of royal descent.
- D. He was born in the latter part of the evil King Manasseh’s reign and lived through the reign of the wicked Amon. As a young man, the prophet-to-be would have been surrounded by such things as idolatry, child sacrifice, and unjust killings—strong influences on a young mind (2 Kings 21:16; 2 Chronicles 33:1–10). But Zephaniah grew into a man of God, able to stand before the people and proclaim God’s message of judgment and hope to a people that had gone astray.
- E. Zephaniah was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Habakkuk.
- F. “*Zephaniah, prophesied during the reign of Josiah, the king of Judah from 640 to 609 BC (Zephaniah 1:1). It was a time of revival (2 Kings 22), but the captivity was impending, nevertheless, and Zephaniah points out the moral state which, despite the superficial revival under Josiah (Jeremiah 2:11-13), made it inevitable. This book mentions the day of the Lord more than does any other book in the Old Testament, clarifying the picture of Judah’s fall to Babylon and the eventual judgment and restoration of all humanity in the future. In this case, it refers primarily to God’s impending time of judgment on the nation of Judah. Zephaniah saw in the day of the*

Lord the destruction of his country, his neighbors, and eventually the whole earth (Zephaniah 1:2, 4; 2:10). Zephaniah wrote that the day of the Lord was near (1:14), that it would be a time a wrath (1:15), that it would come as judgment on sin (1:17), and that ultimately it would result in the blessing of God's presence among His people (3:17)." – Pastor Phil Spencer

- G. One of the great lessons that we learn from Zephaniah is that you can grow up surrounded by wickedness and still become a man of God through right choices.

X. HAGGAI

- A. Haggai is the second shortest book in the Old Testament.
- B. His name means "*festive or festal one*" which indicates that he was probably born on a feast day.
- C. According to Haggai 1:1, September 24 520 B.C. was when "*the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel.*" The backdrop of the prophecy of Haggai is found in the book of Ezra.
- D. "*In 538 B.C., as a result of the proclamation of Cyrus the Persian (Ezra 1:1–4), Israel was allowed to return from Babylon to her homeland under the civil leadership of Zerubbabel and the spiritual guidance of Joshua the High-Priest (Ezra 3:2). About 50,000 Jews returned. In 536 B.C., they began to rebuild the temple (cf. Ezra 3:1–4:5) but opposition from neighbors and indifference by the Jews caused the work to be abandoned (Ezra 4:1–24). Sixteen years later Haggai and Zechariah were commissioned by the Lord to stir up the people to 1) not only rebuild the temple, but also to 2) reorder their spiritual priorities (cf. Ezra 5:1–6:22). As a result, the temple was completed 4 years later (516 B.C.; Ezra 6:15)."*
- E. The book of Haggai is quoted in Hebrews 12:26, giving evidence of its canonicity.

XI. ZECHARIAH

- A. Zechariah means "*Yahweh Remembers*".
- B. Zechariah was born in Babylon and brought to Jerusalem in the return of Zerubbabel.
- C. He was called of God to prophesy at a young age in 520 BC.
- D. As was the case with Haggai, he was commissioned of God to urge the people to complete the construction of the Temple.
- E. God gave Zechariah a series of eight visions, four messages, and two burdens. The first eight chapters were written to encourage the people while they were rebuilding the Temple. The last six chapters include some of my favorite chapters in the Old Testament as they prophesy of Israel's repentance and restoration at the Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ!
- F. Sadly, according to Matthew 23:35, Zechariah was murdered between "*the temple and the altar*".

XII. MALACHI

- A. The Book of Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament and concludes the minor prophets.
- B. Malachi means "*My Messenger*".
- C. Malachi is the last prophet in the Old Testament.
- D. He prophesied during the lifetime of Nehemiah.
- E. Judah had been returned to Israel from their captivity, the Temple has been rebuilt, and they had become apathetic and lethargic in their worship of God. Malachi preaches to the people about hypocrisy, infidelity, mixed marriages, robbing God, divorce, false worship, and arrogance. But the people had become so sinful that the messages sent from God no longer had any impact upon them.
- F. After the Book of Malachi, God became very silent! For four hundred years, Judah never heard from a prophet. In fact, the next prophet would be a man sent from God named John the Baptist. That prophet would prepare the way of the Lord. He would be the last of the prophets (*the Law and the prophets were until John*) and would preach "*Behold the Lamb of God*" as he pointed Israel to the Redeemer of Whom the law and prophets testified! The Old Testament begins with "Life" and ends with the word "Curse". We learn that because man cannot keep the Old Covenant, the Old Testament Message is a message of condemnation and death, but it always points men to the grace of God through the Person and Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ!

There is so much information in this lesson that it would be wise for the student to Read and Study this lesson over and over again very carefully.