

The Minor Prophets

A study by David A. DeWitt

Overview Chart of the Old Testament Prophets [gotquestions.org]

950	900	850	800	750	700	650	600	550	500	450	400
Egypt			Assyria				Babylon		Persia		
N. & S. Kingdoms				Judah Alone		Exile		Post-Exile			
△ Solomon dies				△ Israel falls		△ Judah falls		△ Captives return			
Major Prophets				Isaiah		Jeremiah/Lam.		Daniel			
						Ezekiel					
Minor Prophets		Obadiah	Jonah	Micah	Nahum			Haggai	Malachi		
		Joel	Amos	Hosea	Zephaniah			Zechariah			
					Habakkuk						
Other Prophets & OT Books		Elijah						Esther			
		Elisha						Ezra			
								Nehemiah			

The Old Testament Order of All the Prophetic Books

Note: there are 12 minor prophets and 4 major prophets (there are 17 prophetic books because Lamentations was written by Jeremiah). The designation “Major” and “Minor” are only about the physical size of the prophetic book. The dates cover the approximate time the prophet prophesied.

1. Isaiah 740-690 B.C.
2. Jeremiah 627-585 B.C.
3. Lamentations 585 B.C.
4. Ezekiel 592-570 B.C.
5. Daniel 606-536 B.C.
6. Hosea 760-710 B.C.
7. Joel 830 B.C.
8. Amos 760-750 B.C.
9. Obadiah 845 B.C.?
10. Jonah 780-750 B.C.
11. Micah 735-700 B.C.
12. Nahum 650-612 B.C.
13. Habakkuk 612-606 B.C.
14. Zephaniah 525 B.C.



15. Haggai 520 B.C.
16. Zechariah 520-518 B.C.
17. Malachi 445-425 B.C.

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The Minor Prophets and the Exile

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Minor Prophets in Chronological Order

[Sources for dates include: “The Ryrie Study Bible,” gotquestions.org, and “The Bible Knowledge Commentary”]

We Shall Study the Minor Prophets Chronologically

Note: all of the Minor Prophets are after the ministries of Elijah and Elisha (early-to-mid-800s). The dates for the writing of the prophets are circa (approximate) dates.

1. Obadiah 840s B.C. (written 840s)
2. Joel 830-796 B.C. (written 835)
3. Jonah 780-750 B.C. (written 760) overlapping the ministry of Elijah, 849 B.C.
4. Amos 760-750 B.C. (written 755)
5. Hosea 755-715 B.C. (written 710) overlapping the ministry of Isaiah, 740-690 B.C.
6. Micah 740-690 B.C. (written 700) overlapping the ministry of Isaiah, 740-690 B.C.
7. Nahum 650-612 B.C. (written 612) during the ministry of Jeremiah, 627-585 B.C.
8. Zephaniah 625 B.C. (written 625) during the ministry of Jeremiah, 627-585 B.C.
9. Habakkuk 606-604 B.C. (written 606-604) during the ministry of Jeremiah, 627-585 B.C. and Daniel 606-536 B.C.
10. Haggai 520 B.C. (written 520)
11. Zechariah 520-518 B.C. (written 520-518)
12. Malachi 450-400 B.C. (written 450-400)

Introduction to the Minor Prophets

Amos wrote, “*The Lord God has spoken! Who can but prophesy?*” (Amos 3:8).

God gave us general revelation through nature and our conscience (Romans 1 and 2). God gave special revelation in words. That is what the Bible is, a record of God’s Special Revelation. God gave verbal revelation to Adam (c. 4000 B.C.), Noah (c. before 3000, after 2500 B.C.), Abraham (c. 2000 B.C.) and Moses (c. 1500 B.C.). After the death of Moses, Joshua (in the 1400s B.C.) conquered the Land we call Israel, which God promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The conquest of Joshua was followed by a time of judges (1300s-1100s B.C.). Judges received revelation from God to accomplish a particular deliverance for Israel from a bondage caused by their disobedience. The time of the judges was followed by the era of the kings (c. 1100 B.C. -586 B.C.). But God mostly spoke to the kings through prophets, the first of which was Samuel (Acts 13:20), who (reluctantly) anointed Saul (in the 1100s B.C.) and David (in the 1000s B.C.), who was succeeded by his son, Solomon (in the 900s B.C.)

After the reign of Solomon, Israel was divided (c. 930 B.C.) into a Northern Kingdom (called Israel), consisting of ten tribes, and a Southern Kingdom (called Judah), consisting of two tribes. Israel lasted 200 years, and had 19 kings, all of them bad and none of which were in the Davidic line. The Northern Kingdom went into captivity to Assyria in **722 B.C.** The prophets warned Israel of this captivity due to their sin, especially idolatry. The Northern Kingdom of Israel, as a nation, did not return to the Land (essentially until after 1947).

Judah lasted about 100 years longer, and had 19 kings, some good and some bad and one evil queen. But all the kings were descendants of King David. The Southern Kingdom prophets warned Judah about its sin, especially idolatry, and pointed to the previous destruction of Israel as an example of what would happen to Judah also. Then in **586 B.C.**, Judah fell captive to Babylon. After 70 years, the Jews returned to the Land, where the post-exilic minor prophets encouraged the rebuilding of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. But they also foretold the coming of the Messiah and His Kingdom as the hope for the future restoration of the united Jewish nation. A study of the prophets needs to keep in mind the two exile dates:

- The Northern Kingdom of Israel in **722 B.C.**
- The Southern Kingdom of Judah in **586 B.C.**

The future was a vital part of prophetic theology. When repentance in the nations did not occur, God’s judgment was unavoidable. The prophetic future was both immediate and remote. Idolatry was the pinnacle of Israel’s sin, the prophets gave the sins of the nation as the reason for judgment.

The prophets were not social reformers. They were theological messengers. Their focus was their commitment to a holy God and the Word of God, not the betterment of society. When there was no repentance, God’s judgment was unavoidable. But because of God’s commitment to Abraham, the prophets also proclaimed a message of restoration to the Land, both in the near and distant future, often mingling the two.

There were also “false prophets,” who operated in parallel to the true prophets of God. They did not produce literature, and the events of history eventually proved their message to be false.

However, the false prophets were an influential movement. They represented the popular religions. They spoke in the name of God and told the people what they wanted to hear. They often referred to dreams and visions and used divination, which was forbidden in the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 18:10, 14). The true prophets of God never used divination, and their revelation was in real words of logical sentences written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). [Much of the background information comes from “An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books,” by C. Hassell Bullock, Moody Press, 2007.]

Definition of a Prophet

In the Old Testament, a prophet was someone who was called by God to be a prophet and used by God to communicate His message to the Jews or nations that had some sort of contact with Israel. The prophets can be divided into the “writing prophets” such as those who have books of the Bible named after them, and non-writing prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Gad, Nathan, and Micah.

The Purpose of this Study of the Minor Prophets

This study will follow the 12 minor prophets chronologically. We shall consider the historical development that surrounds Israel and Judah as we move through the messages of the minor prophets. As we do so, we will make observations and give interpretations, but our focus will be on making a basic application for each of the 12. The minor prophets wrote to Israel and Judah about their situations from the 800s through the 500s B.C. They also predicted future events that would happen in their day, in the near future, and in the distant future. In other words, their prophetic messages have a short-term meaning, a long-term meaning, and a timeless application.

We do not live in the age of the minor prophets. Our age is a *mystery* (Ephesians 3:3-9; Romans 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7; 4:1), something that was not revealed to the Old Testament prophets. We live in the *administration* (literally “dispensation”) of the *mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things*. We live in an age where new prophecy awaits the coming day of the Lord (1 Corinthians 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; Revelation 22:18). The minor prophets did not know about our church/grace age, which began at the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and will end with the Rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 14:1-3). They did not speak to us, but what they spoke is for us. It is inspired of God and verbally inerrant. So, it can be, should be, and must be, applied to us in our age.

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we may have hope” (Romans 15:4)