

## **I. Introduction to the Minor Prophets**

- A. The minor prophets are twelve books of the Bible located at the end of the Old Testament, immediately after Daniel's prophecy.
- B. They tend to be much shorter, hence the name "minor"
  - 1. The shortest of the "Major" is Daniel with 530 verses
  - 2. The longest of the "Minor" is Zechariah with 211 verses
  - 3. Only two - Zechariah and Hosea - have more than ten chapters (14 ea.)
  - 4. Obadiah is the shortest with one chapter; Haggai has two
- C. Each of them are the writing of one man, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
  - 1. They are that man's "life's work"
  - 2. The people to whom they are written are people for which God cared and had a specific message.
- D. They are mostly addressed to one or more of three target audiences:
  - 1. Israel - the ten tribes known as the Northern Kingdom
  - 2. Judah - the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah which are known as the Southern Kingdom
  - 3. The Babylonian captives of Judah, either during or after their exile
  - 4. Obadiah is the exception, addressed to the descendants of Esau
- E. The minor prophets must be understood within the framework of Hebrew history during the time of the divided kingdom, the exile, and the return from exile.
  - 1. You can often find the dates that the kings of Israel and Judah reigned by looking at a good Bible handbook.
  - 2. The minor prophets address the people within one or both of the divided kingdoms during the time of these events.
- F. Except for the last three, all were written before the exile of Judah. None of the minor prophets were written during the exile except Obadiah.
- G. They are known as "The Twelve" just as there were twelve disciples, twelve tribes, etc. There are four major prophets just as there are four NT Gospels.
- H. They were all written in Hebrew
- I. Important dates
  - 1. In about 934 B.C. the kingdom was divided between Jeroboam (Israel) and Rehoboam (Judah).
  - 2. In about 722 B.C. the Northern Kingdom (Israel) was taken captive by the Assyrians. This kingdom is also called Samaria.
    - a. Hosea, Micah, Amos, and Isaiah wrote just prior to this captivity
    - b. Note that "Israel" may refer to the Northern kingdom or it may refer to the restored twelve tribes in the later days.
  - 3. In 586 B.C. the Southern Kingdom (Judah) was taken captive by the Babylonians (Chaldeans). There were actually three phases of this captivity, the last of which ended with the destruction of the temple in 586.
  - 4. From 536 to about 516 B.C. a remnant of the Babylonian captives returned to Israel.
    - a. After the return from captivity, the post exilic prophets wrote
    - b. These are Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

## II. Dating the Minor Prophets using the Kings of Israel and Judah

- A. *Hosea* . . . in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam (the second) the son of Joash, king of Israel (Hos 1:1)
- B. Joel – No kings mentioned in his introduction
  - 1. Joel is difficult to date: is probably written early in Judah’s days around 800 B.C.
- C. *Amos* . . . in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel (Amos 1:1)
- D. Obadiah – No kings mentioned in introduction
  - 1. This is the most difficult of the minor prophets to give a date
  - 2. It seems that most conservative scholars believe Obadiah was penned in the days of Jehoram (Joram), King of Israel, around 845 B.C.
- E. Jonah – No kings mentioned, but we know he was sent to Assyria (Nineveh was its capital) so we know he wrote well before the Northern captivity
- F. *Micah* . . . in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (Micah 1:1)
- G. Nahum – No kings mentioned, but historical events such as the fall of Thebes in Egypt, the fall of Nineveh, place the date of the book near 650 B.C.
  - 1. Thebes’ fall (661) was past, and Nineveh’s fall (612) was future
- H. Habakkuk – No kings mentioned, but he wrote during the “raising” of the Babylonians (Hab 1:6) placing him sometime around or before 600 B.C.
- I. *Zephaniah* . . . in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah (Zeph 1:1)
- J. *Haggai*, Zechariah, and Malachi (post exile)
  - 1. These books are dated according to the Gentile kings
    - a. Haggai - Darius’ Second year
    - b. Zechariah - Darius’ Second year
    - c. Malachi - no king named: sometime near 400 B.C. or a bit earlier

## III. The Importance and Application of the Minor Prophets

- A. No less than the prophecy of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, the minor prophets make up a notable percentage of the Bible, the Old Testament, and the prophetic books of the Bible.
  - 1. They are important
  - 2. Failure to understand the minor prophets will result in a failure to completely understand the Bible.
- B. The minor prophets reveal the mind of God in a unique way, as the LORD speaks to people we may have thought unworthy of His voice (i.e. Nineveh, the Edomites, etc.).
  - 1. The LORD is gracious, and forewarns even those who seem to have absolutely no regard for His word (i.e. Edom).
  - 2. God often explains His judgement before executing it.
- C. Nobody would suggest that the Major prophets are unimportant: equally so, the minor prophets are very important.
- D. Several messages emerge from the Minor Prophets, which are applicable today in principle, considering the comparison of our history with that of Israel and Judah.
  - 1. Just as believers (and some churches) can stray from God’s commands,

Israel and Judah strayed.

2. Just as believers can become idolatrous, so did Israel and Judah.
3. Just as God earnestly desired that Israel and Judah would repent, rather than face judgment, so He desires believers to repent.
4. God's judgment is applicable to the believer as well as the heathen.
5. If God would judge His people Israel, we should not be so brazen as to think that we are immune to His judgment.
6. Just as a remnant refused to turn their back on God, we also have a small number today who still walk with Him.
7. God's frustration towards Israel and Judah is evident. He would not force them to repent, and He tried all He could to induce them to repent.
8. Israel and Judah were forced to experience the consequences of sin as these seemed to be the only way to show them that they needed God.
9. Just as we have many today who claim to obey and love the Lord, but who live in utter disobedience, idolatry, and rebellion, so was Israel and Judah.

## H O M E W O R K

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Memorize the names of each of the minor prophets, in the order in which they appear in the King James Bible.
  
2. List the following dates in the history of Israel:
  - a. The date the Kingdom was divided (approx.)
  
  - b. The date the Northern Kingdom fell to Assyria
  
  - c. The date the Southern Kingdom fell to Babylon (date of the 3<sup>rd</sup> captivity)
  
  - d. The date the Souther Kingdom returned from exile.
  
3. Which of the Minor Prophets were written after the return from exile?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Including those that name Gentile kings, how many of the minor prophets can be “dated” by considering which kings were in rule while they were being written? Which ones cannot?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Which is the shortest minor prophet, and the hardest of them to give a date?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Explain one way that you can apply the lessons of the Minor Prophets to Christian life in our day. Be brief but specific.