

Why Study the Minor Prophets?

Hosea – Malachi

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Introduction: It has been said, “The Bible is as up to date as the morning newspaper.” If that is true, then these so-called “Minor Prophets” can be included for messages that are relevant to our contemporary day. These 12 prophets spoke in a time of moral degeneration & cultural upheaval – that is now parallel in the day in which we live. What lessons can we learn from these 12 books? John Blanchard, in his book *Major Points from the Minor Prophets*, suggests: “We see the devastating effects of corruption eating away the moral fiber of a nation & we are given breath-taking glimpses of God’s sovereignty, His hatred of sin, & His amazing love. Carefully read & wisely understood, they act as powerful stabilizers for God’s people today as they face the twenty-first century’s changes & challenges.”

Tonight I just want to introduce us to these 12 books, having already begun last week with a look at Obadiah. Let’s use the old-fashioned method of the reporter & ask: who, why, where, when, & what of these Minor Prophets.

I. Who were these Minor Prophets?

A. They were identified by their name as they spoke & wrote.

B. They were inspired by the Spirit of God to prophesy:

1. “The Holy Spirit moved men to write. He allowed them to use their own style, culture, gifts, & character, to use the results of their own study & research, to write of their own experience & to express what was in their mind. At the same time, the Holy Spirit did not allow error to influence their writings; He overruled in the expression of thought & in the choice of words. Thus they recorded accurately all that God wanted them to say & exactly how he wanted them to say it, in their own character, style, & language” (Pastor Brian Edwards).
2. “The Bible appears like a symphony orchestra, with the Holy Ghost as its Toscanini; each instrument has been brought willingly, spontaneously, creatively, to play his notes *just as the great conductor desired*, though none of them could ever hear the music as a whole” (J.I. Packer).

II. Why were they called “Minor Prophets”?

A. They were the shortest of the O.T. prophets (yet compare shorter historical books).

B. They were included with the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) in the Hebrew section of the Bible called “The Prophets” – they were called “The Twelve.”

[Note: There are a total of 66 chapters in these 12 books; there are 66 books in the Bible.]

III. Where were they living/ministering?

A. Prophets of (to) Israel (Northern Kingdom):

1. Jonah
2. Amos
3. Hosea

B. Prophets of (to) Judah (Southern Kingdom):

- | | |
|------------|--------------|
| 1. Obadiah | 4. Nahum |
| 2. Joel | 5. Habakkuk |
| 3. Micah | 6. Zephaniah |

C. Postexilic prophets:

1. Haggai
2. Zechariah
3. Malachi

IV. When did they minister?

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|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| A. Obadiah > 840's B.C. | G. Nahum > 663-612 B.C. |
| B. Joel > 835-756 B.C. | H. Zephaniah > 623 B.C. |
| C. Jonah > 780-750 B.C. | I. Habakkuk > 606 B.C. |
| D. Amos > 765-750 B.C. | J. Haggai > 520 B.C. |
| E. Hosea > 755-715 B.C. | K. Zechariah > 520-518 B.C. |
| F. Micah > 740-690 B.C. | L. Malachi > 450-400 B.C. |

V. What was their ministry/message?

A. Their description:

1. Terms used (see I Samuel 9:9) >
 - a. "Seer"- emphasis upon what he "sees" not "says" – "Above all else what they caught was a glimpse of the *mind of God*" (Blanchard).
 - b. "Prophet"- the "*phet*" is from the verb "to speak;" the "*pro*" can mean "before" or "for" - the prophet spoke "before" something happened & he spoke on behalf ("for") of God.
2. Tasks performed >
 - a. Foretelling – see Amos 3:7 – prophecy of future events. "No true prophet foretold the future to satisfy men's curiosity about what was about to happen, to project his own personality or ministry, or to prove he was in intimate touch with God. When a prophet spoke in the name of the Lord it was always to bring people to repentance, faith, & obedience" (Blanchard).
 - b. Forthtelling – as God's spokesman – see Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13 etc. Compare Hosea 1:1 with II Samuel 23:2 & II Peter 1:21. "An O.T. prophecy was a means by which an infallible God used fallible men to bring an infallible word to fallible people. This meant that when exercising their ministries *O.T. prophets never made a false statement*, because God guaranteed the integrity of every word He gave them to speak" (Blanchard).

B. Their declaration:

1. God's undeniable sovereignty >
 - a. Haggai 2:6.
 - b. Obadiah :15, 21.
2. God's inevitable judgment (against sin) >
 - a. Malachi 4:5.
 - b. Joel 3:12.

Summary: "Reading the prophets can be an unsettling experience. Here we see God's utter, absolute fury against sin. The graphic accounts of what God is going to do to his own faithless, immoral, complacent people constitute some of the scariest words in all of literature" (Veith).

3. God's amazing love >
 - a. Hosea 1-3, the story of Hosea & Gomer.
 - b. Hosea 14:4.
4. God's inescapable call (for repentance) >
 - a. Joel 2:12-13.
 - b. Zechariah 1:3.
5. God's indescribable Messiah >
 - a. Micah 5:2.
 - b. Zechariah 9:9.

Conclusion: What can we anticipate learning from a study of the Minor Prophets? The messages are not always comforting, but rather probing & prodding. "Social justice, rotten religion, poisonous hypocrisy, these & so much more come under the scrutiny of God's searing holiness. Spiritual heart surgery may very well be the outcome if we truly absorb the messages of these twelve books" (Clarke). Could they result in transformation of our generation? That can only occur by revival, remembering that "*judgment must begin at the house of God*" (I Peter 4:17). May we allow the Spirit of God to use the Word of God in our hearts to bring about repentance & revival in our day, beginning in our church. Might we ask with the Psalmist, "*Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?*" (Psalm 85:6).

Are you open & ready for spiritual heart surgery?