

Minor Prophets

Catawba River Baptist Bible Institute, Fall 2023

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Class Schedule:

Week 1:

1. Overview of class
2. Defining Minor Prophets
3. Minor Prophets in Old Testament Context
 - a. Historical
 - b. Scriptural
4. Hosea

Week 2:

1. Amos
2. Micah
3. Jonah

Week 3:

1. Nahum
2. Zephaniah
3. Habakkuk

Week 4:

1. Haggai
2. Zechariah
3. Malachi

Week 5:

1. Joel
2. Obadiah
3. Conclusion

WEEK ONE:

I. Old Testament Prophets

a. Pre-Monarchy Prophets-

- i. Led the people directly. Sometimes the role overlapped with judges.
- ii. Examples include Moses, Deborah.
- iii. Samuel was the last pre-monarchy prophet, because he anointed Saul and David as kings.

b. Pre-Classical Prophets-

- i. Prophesied primarily to the king.
- ii. Examples include Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, Micah.

c. Classical Prophets-

- i. Some advised or ministered to kings, but all spoke to the people.
- ii. Prophesied to Israel, Judah, and surrounding nations.
- iii. Some predicted future events.
- iv. Some spoke God's truth to their own generations without future predictions.
- v. All the classical prophets called people back to obedience to God's covenants.
- vi. Classical prophets include writing and non-writing prophets.

1. Non-writing prophets such as Elijah and Elisha did not leave written works behind.
2. Writing prophets left written works. Divided into two categories.
 - a. Former prophets- those prophets who wrote or compiled historical books of the Old Testament, including Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles.
 - b. Latter prophets- those whose books bear the name of the prophet.
 - i. Major prophets- wrote longer books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel
 - ii. Minor prophets- wrote shorter books. 12 of them. The subject of this class.

II. Old Testament Historical Context

- a. Beginning to about 1800 B.C.- creation and the call of Abraham and his family.
 - i. Genesis- depicts creation, call of Abraham, Abraham's family.
 - ii. Job- set in the same historical and theological context- pre-covenant, pre-law, pre-Israel.
- b. Formation of the people of Israel.
 - i. Exodus- Israel's deliverance from Egypt
 - ii. Leviticus, Deuteronomy- the law and “second law”- Deuteronomy is a summary and retelling of the law as given in

Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

iii. Numbers- mostly the history of Israel's wilderness wanderings.

c. Israel as separate clans

i. Joshua

ii. Judges

iii. Ruth

d. The united and divided monarchies-

i. United Monarchy- Israel was united under Saul, David, and Solomon.

ii. Divided Monarchy- Divided into Israel and Judah under Solomon's son Rehoboam.

iii. Depicted in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles

e. Exile-

i. Assyria conquered Samaria and Israel in 722 B.C.

ii. Judah was taken captive to Babylon in 586 B.C.

iii. These events are depicted in II Chronicles, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Esther.

f. Post-Exilic Period- Israel is allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the Temple.

i. Ezra, Nehemiah.

- g. The Old Testament written account ends about 400 B.C.

III. The Place of the Minor Prophets in Old Testament History

- a. The 12 minor prophets span from about 780 B.C. to 430 B.C.
- b. The order of the minor prophets is loosely chronological, from pre-exilic to post-exilic prophets.
- c. Six of the 12 books give historical context to aid in dating.
- d. Only Joel and Obadiah have an obscure or unclear context and are very difficult to date.
 - i. Assyrian Period Prophets:
 1. Hosea (750-715 B.C.)
 2. Amos (760-750 B.C.)
 3. Micah (735-690 B.C.)
 4. Jonah (785-775 B.C.)
 - ii. Overlap Between Assyrian and Babylonian Period:
 1. Nahum (650-630 B.C. – Babylon was rising to become the world power, but did not invade Judah until 586 B.C.)
 - iii. Babylonian Period Prophets:
 1. Zephaniah (630-608 B.C.)- warns of impending Babylonian exile.
 2. Habbakuk (620 B.C.)- warns of impending Babylonian exile.

3. Haggai (520 B.C.)
4. Zechariah (520-518 B.C.)
5. Malachi (450-430 B.C.)

iv. Unclear Historical Context:

1. Joel
2. Obadiah

HOSEA

Date: Probably written between 750 and 715 B.C.

Author: Hosea. His name means “God sows”.

Context:

1. Geographically focused on Jezreel.
 - a. In the gospels, very near the city of Nain, where Jesus raised the widow's son (Lk 7:11-17).
 - b. Near Mount Gilboa where Saul died in battle against Philistines.
 - c. Where Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was unsuccessfully crowned as king.
 - d. The site of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel's palace. Site of Naboth's vineyard (I Kings 21).
 - i. Ahab's death was prophesied here in I Kings 21:22.
 - ii. Jezebel died here in I Kings 21:22.
 - iii. Ahab's son died here in II Kings 9:21.
 - iv. The entire house of Ahab was killed here in II Kings 10:11.
 - e. Jezreel is a place associated with death in the mind of Israel.
 - i. Hosea 1:4-5 associates Jezreel with death and judgment of the kingdom of Israel.
 - f. For God, Jezreel is a place of grace and new beginnings.
 - i. Hosea 2:19-22.

g. “Jezreel” means “God plants”. A pun with “Hosea”- “God sows”.

2. Historically associated with the following kings and prophets:
 - a. Southern kings:
 - i. Uzziah
 - ii. Jotham
 - iii. Ahaz
 - iv. Hezekiah
 - b. Northern king:
 - i. Jereboam II. The last great king of Israel. Ruled 40 years. After he died, 6 kings served in the last 30 years before Israel fell to Assyria.
 - c. Prophets:
 - i. Amos
 - ii. Isaiah

Theological Outline:

1. Israel is an unfaithful wife to God; a prostitute selling herself to idols. But God can restore the covenant. Ch. 1-3
 - a. The word for “harlotry” is used 16 times in Hosea.
2. Description of Israel’s unfaithfulness- Ch. 4-10
3. Israel is like a rebellious child to God her Father, but God can restore the relationship- Ch. 11-14.

Textual Outline:

1. The Adultery of Israel- 1:1-3:5
 - a. Hosea's Marriage to Gomer symbolizes God's Marriage to Israel- vs. 1:2-2:1
 - i. God calls Hosea to marry a prostitute- 1:2-3.
 - ii. Gomer bears three children which are given symbolic names- 1:4-9.
 1. Jezreel- "God plants"- God will plant judgment in Israel.
 2. Lo-Ruhamah- "God will no more have mercy on Israel".
 3. Lo-Ammi- "not my people".
 - b. Prophecy of the restoration of the children of Israel and Judah.
 - c. Chastisement of Israel for Adultery- 2:2-23
 - i. Charges against Israel for her sin- 2:2-13
 - ii. Prophecy of God's grace and redemption- 2:14-23
 - d. Hosea's Restoration of Gomer- 3:1-5
 - i. Symbolic of God's restoration of Israel.
2. God's Accusations Against Israel- 4:1-13:16
 - a. God's Charges- 4:1-7:16
 - i. God's First Charge: Israel is Corrupt and Sinful- 4:1-19

- ii. God's Second Charge: The Priests are Corrupt- 5:1-15
- iii. God's Third Charge: Israel's Repentance is Insincere- 6:1-11
- iv. God's Fourth Charge: Israel is Politically Corrupt- 7:1-7
- v. God's Fifth Charge: Israel's Foreign Policy is Corrupt- 7:8-16
- b. God's Judgment- 8:1-14
- c. Israel is Degenerate- 9:1-11:11
 - i. Israel should not rejoice in her sin- 9:1-9
 - ii. God found Israel desolate and restored here. Israel has destroyed herself- 9:10-17
 - iii. Israel's Captivity will Come- 10:1-15
 - iv. God's Love for Israel- 11:1-11
- d. God's Faithfulness in Spite of Israel's Apostasy- 11:12-13:16
 - i. Israel has adopted the ways of the Caananites- 11:12-12:14
 - ii. Israel is Utterly Guilty and Fallen- 13:1-16

3. Israel's Repentance and God's Forgiveness- 14:1-9

- a. Call to Repentance- 14:1-3
- b. Promise of Healing- 14:4-8
- c. Final Word to the Wise- 14:9

Week Two: Amos, Micah, Jonah

Amos:

Amos - Background

Amos, Hosea, Jonah, and Isaiah were the earliest of the “writing prophets.”

Amos was from Tekoa, small town south of Jerusalem in the southern kingdom of Judah, but preached in the northern kingdom of Israel. He was a “missionary prophet.”

He preached primarily to Israel. He mentions Israel 25 times, Judah 4 times.

During Amos’ time, a small minority had become very wealthy, while most people lived a life similar to southern sharecroppers- farming land they did not own for a fraction of its produce.

He preached primarily to the rich who became complacent in their duties to do justice to the poor.

Amos- Structure

Built on the concept of “sevens”.

1. Chapters 1-2: Israel is as Sinful as the Nations Around Her
 - a. 7 judgments against other nations- 1:1-2:5
 - i. Damascus- 1:3-5
 - ii. Gaza- 1:6-8
 - iii. Tyre- 1:9-10
 - iv. Edom- 1:11-12
 - v. Ammon- 1:13-15
 - vi. Moab- 2:1-3

vii. Judah- 2:4-5

b. 7 judgments against Israel- 2:6-8

i. Sell the righteous for silver

ii. Sell the poor for a pair of sandals

iii. Pant after the dust on the head of the poor

iv. Pervert the way of the humble

v. A man and his father go in to the same girl

vi. Sexually immoral idolatry- lie down by every idol on clothes taken in pledge.

vii. Political and economic corruption- drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.

c. 7 inescapable punishments- 2:14-16

i. Flight will perish from the swift

ii. The strong shall not strengthen his power

iii. The mighty will not deliver himself

iv. He shall not stand who handles the bow

v. The swift of foot shall not escape

vi. He who rides a horse will not deliver himself

vii. The most courageous will flee naked

2. Chapter 3: God's Wrath will Come

- a. 7 rhetorical questions- 3:3-6
 - i. Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?
 - ii. Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey?
 - iii. Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing?
 - iv. Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it?
 - v. Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all?
 - vi. If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid?
 - vii. If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done *it*?
- b. 7 punishments- 3:14-15
 - i. Punish Israel for her transgressions
 - ii. Visit destruction on the altars of Bethel
 - iii. the horns of the altar will be cut off
 - iv. the horns of the altar will fall to the ground
 - v. destruction of the winter house and summer house
 - vi. houses of ivory shall perish
 - vii. great houses will have an end

3. Chapter 4: God has Called Israel to Repentance

- a. 7 ironic imperatives- 4:1-5
 - i. Hear this word- 4:1
 - ii. Come to Bethel and transgress- 4:4
 - iii. At Gilgal multiply transgression- 4:4
 - iv. Bring sacrifices every morning- 4:4
 - v. Bring tithes every 3 days- 4:4
 - vi. Offer a thanksgiving offering- 4:5
 - vii. Proclaim and announce freewill offerings- 4:5
- b. 7 calls to repentance- 4:6-13
 - i. Cleanliness of teeth- 4:6
 - ii. Withheld rain- 4:7
 - iii. Blight and mildew- 4:9
 - iv. Locusts- 4:9
 - v. Plague like in Egypt- 4:10
 - vi. Killed young men with the sword- 4:10
 - vii. Overthrown like Sodom and Gomorrah- 4:11

4. 5:1-17: A Call to Turn from Sin

- a. 7 instances of God's grace- 5:8-9
 - i. He made the Pleiades and Orion- 5:8
 - ii. He turns the shadow of death into morning- 5:8
 - iii. And makes the day dark as night- 5:8
 - iv. He calls for the waters of the sea- 5:8
 - v. And pours them out on the face of the earth- 5:8
 - vi. He rains ruin upon the strong- 5:9
 - vii. So that fury comes upon the fortress- 5:9
- b. 7 examples of praise- 5:14-15
 - i. Seek good and not evil- 5:14
 - ii. So that you may live- 5:14
 - iii. The lord of hosts will be with you- 5:14
 - iv. Hate evil- 5:15
 - v. Love good- 5:15
 - vi. Establish justice in the gate- 5:15
 - vii. God will be gracious- 5:15

5. 5:18-6:14: Coming Judgment

- a. 7 empty rituals- 5:21-23

- i. Feast days
- ii. Sacred assemblies
- iii. Burnt offerings
- iv. Grain offerings
- v. Fattened peace offerings
- vi. Songs
- vii. Stringed instruments

b. If God does not want these things, what does He want?- 5:24
*But let justice run down like water,
And righteousness like a mighty stream.*

- c. 7 sins of the rich- 6:4-6
 - i. Lie on beds of ivory- 6:4
 - ii. Stretch out on your couches- 6:4
 - iii. Eat lambs from the flock- 6:4
 - iv. Eat young calves- 6:4
 - v. Sing idly to musical instruments- 6:5
 - vi. Drink wine from bowls- 6:6
 - vii. Anoint with the best ointments- 6:6

6. Narrative- 7:1-8:3

- a. 3 Visions
 - i. Locust- 7:1-3
 - ii. Fire – 7:4-6
 - iii. Plumb line- 7:7-9
- b. Complaint against Amos- hurting Israel's feelings- 10-17
- c. 7 mentions of Israel- 7:9-17
 - i. Sanctuaries of Israel laid waste- 9:9
 - ii. Word sent from Amaziah to Jereboam, king of Israel- 9:10
 - iii. Amos has conspired against Israel- 9:10
 - iv. Israel shall be led away captive- 9:11
 - v. Amos sent to prophecy to Israel- 9:15
 - vi. Amaziah does not want to hear God's Word to Israel- 9:16
 - vii. Israel shall be led away captive- 9:17

7. God's Promise to Restore Israel- 8:4-9:15

- a. 7 abuses of power- 8:4-8
 - i. Swallow the needy- 8:4
 - ii. Make the poor fall- 8:4
 - iii. Despise religious observance that interferes with commerce- 8:5

- iv. Cheating – 8:5
- v. Buying the poor for silver- 8:6
- vi. Buying the needy for a pair of sandals- 8:6
- vii. Selling bad wheat- 8:6
- b. 7 threats from God- 9:1-4
 - i. I will slay the last of them- 9:1
 - ii. My hand shall take them- 9:2
 - iii. I will bring them down- 9:2
 - iv. I will search and take them-9:3
 - v. I will command the serpent, and it will bite them- 9:3
 - vi. I will command the sword, and it will slay them- 9:4
 - vii. I will set my eyes on them for harm and not for good- 9:4
- c. 7 great promises from God- 9:11-15
 - i. I will raise up the tabernacle of David- 9:11
 - ii. I will raise up its ruins and rebuild it- 9:11
 - iii. Cause them to possess the remnant of Edom- 9:12
 - iv. Agricultural abundance- plowman overtake the reaper- 9:13
 - v. I will bring back the captives- 9:14

vi. The captives will rebuild Israel- 9:14

vii. I will plant them in their land- 9:15

Micah

Political/Historical Climate

Hosea and Amos mention king Uzziah, but Micah does not. He served during the time of Hezekiah. Overlaps with Isaiah (Is 9:6).

He lived to see the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C.

In Assyria, Shalmaneser III had ruled from 858 to 824 B.C. After his death, the Assyrian empire stagnated until 745 B.C. when Tiglath Pileser III (aka Pul) came to power.

To oppose Tiglath Pileser, Israel aligned with Samaria. They tried to compel Judah to join the alliance. Judah appealed to Assyria for protection. 2 Kings 16.

Micah:

From Moresheth, near Jerusalem.

A southern prophet who preached to Judah, though he focused frequently on Israel.

Saw the decline of Israel as a warning to Judah.

Structure:

The structure is more difficult to follow than Amos. Three broad sections are usually recognized, marked by the word “hear”.

1. Hear- Israel will be exiled for idolatry, but will return- 1:1-2:13
2. Hear now- Jerusalem will fall, but God will give new leadership- 3:1-5:15
3. Hear now- Israel is spiritually bankrupt, but God will forgive- 6:1-7:20

Israel's Sins:

1. Love for evil and exploitation of the weak and poor.- 2:1-3

2. Rejection of God's truth- 2:6-7, 2:11, 3:5-7
3. Cheating and stealing-
 - a. 2:8- the poor rob the rich
 - b. 6:9-12
4. Corrupt leadership- 3:1-4, 9-11
5. Summary of Israel's sins: 7:1-6

God's Judgment

1. He will send disaster- 1:3, 2:3
2. He will hide His face and not answer His people- 3:4, 7
3. He will devastate their land- 1:6-7, 3:12
4. He will send famine, sword, and ruin- 6:13-15
5. He will send them to exile in Babylon- 4:10

God's Expectation: 6:8

*He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?*

Jonah

Political/Historical Context

“On the 13th day of the month I left Nineveh and approached the city of Burmarana and conquered it. We conquered the city and took their soldiers captive. Later we executed 300 of them with a sword. I built up pillars of the skulls of their dead at the entrance to the city. From there we moved to the area of Pakaruhbuni and we turned the cities of that area into ruins. We covered the wide plain with the corpses of their warriors and executed 1300 of their soldiers with the sword. . . . I piled up the dead of the city in a moat around the town. I dyed the mountains of the land red with the blood of our dead enemies.”

Annals of Shalmanezer, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955) p. 277.

The Assyrian empire was rising and threatening Israel. They were known as brutal and savage warriors and terrible oppressors.

Many Jews thought- as their neighbors did- that gods were regional. Yahweh was the God of Israel and Judah, but not the God of Assyria.

Thus, Jonah thought that he could run from the presence of God by leaving Israel.

Jonah

A prophet of the northern kingdom of Israel.

From Gath-Hepher, about 3 miles north of what would become Nazareth.

Well-known prophet in his time.

Structure

This book is unique among the minor prophets in that it is mostly narrative. It is a prophetic story, rather than a divine proclamation.

1. Chapter 1- Jonah is called and runs from God

a. God prepared:

- i. The prophet- 1:1-2
- ii. The storm- 1:4
- iii. The fish- 1:17

2. Chapter 2- Jonah's Prayer- Jonah speaks to God, God speaks to the fish.

- a. Prayer for deliverance- 2:1-6
- b. Praise for Salvation- 2:7-9
- c. Jonah on dry land- 2:10

3. Chapter 3- Jonah prophesies in Ninevah

- a. God repeats His commission- 3:1-2
- b. Jonah's prophecy: Ninevah will be overthrown in 40 days- 3:3-4
- c. Nineva's repentance- 3:5-9
- d. God relents of His judgment- 3:10

4. Chapter 4- Jonah's Vision Expands

- a. Jonah resents their repentance- 4:1-2
- b. Jonah would rather die than see the Ninevites repent- 4:3-9
 - i. Two statements, two questions:
 1. It is better for me to die than to live- 4:3, 8
 2. Is it right to be angry?- 4:4, 9

- c. Concluding moral: God cares for the nations, just as He does for Israel.

WEEK THREE:

NahumPolitical/Historical Context:

Prophets have predicted the fall of Israel to Assyria for over 80 years. Now Israel has fallen.

2 Kings:17:1-13

In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned nine years. ² And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel who were before him. ³ Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him; and Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute money. ⁴ And the king of Assyria uncovered a conspiracy by Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and brought no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. Therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.

⁵ Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years. ⁶ In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

⁷ For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods, ⁸ and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. ⁹ Also the children of Israel secretly did against the LORD their God things that were not right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from watchtower to fortified city. ¹⁰ They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. ¹¹ There they burned incense on all the high places, like the nations whom the LORD had carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger, ¹² for they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, “You shall not do this thing.”

Nahum prophesied to Judah about the downfall of Assyria. Assyria has conquered most of the world, but they will fall under the judgment of God.

No firm date can be given for Nahum. No kings are mentioned, or specific, datable events. Some time after 722 B.C.

Nahum:

An unknown prophet from an unknown village. Nahum is from Elkosh. We do not have any other record of this village. It is not mentioned in the Bible elsewhere.

Nahum is quoted only once in the New Testament.

Nahum 1:15-

*Behold, on the mountains
The feet of him who brings good tidings,
Who proclaims peace!
O Judah, keep your appointed feasts,
Perform your vows.
For the wicked one shall no more pass through you;
He is utterly cut off.*

Romans 10:15-

And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

*“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,
Who bring glad tidings of good things!”*

Outline:¹

1. God roars into view- 1:12-10
2. Ninevah will be destroyed- 1:11-15
3. Description of Ninevah's Fall- 2:1-10

¹ Adapted from David A. Dorsey, *A Literary Structure of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999) pp. 301-305

4. God's judgment- 2:11-13
5. Ninevah will stand alone with none to defend her- 3:1-7
6. Ninevah will be as defenseless as the cities she conquered- 3:8-13
7. Ninevah's destruction will be permanent- 3:14-19

Zephaniah

Political/Cultural Context:

Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah, the last righteous king of the southern kingdom of Judah.

Written sometime between 630 and 608 B.C.

Josiah's reforms occurred in the 18th year of his reign, about 621 B.C. – 2 Kings 22:3, 2 Chronicles 34:8. Zephaniah's prophecy seems to pre-date these reforms because he strongly condemns Judah's sins.

Assyria's capital city of Ninevah fell to the Babylonians in 612 B.C. Zephaniah's prophecy pre-dates this- Zephaniah 2:13.

Assyria is in decline and Babylon is rising.

Assurbanipal, the last great Assyrian king, died in 633 B.C. Assyria declined and began to splinter.

Nabopolassar, vassal king of Babylon under Assyria, declared independence from Assyria in 625 B.C. War followed.

Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, led the Babylonian army to attack Ninevah in 612 B.C. He destroyed the city.

In 6098 Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the last of the Assyrian army at Haran. Babylon became ruler of all lands conquered by Assyria.

Pharaoh Neco of Egypt sent armies to help Assyria against Babylon. Josiah, king of Judah, sent the Judean army to block Egypt at Meggido in southern Israel. Josiah was killed in the battle there. 2 Kings 23:28-30:

Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ²⁹ In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria, to the River Euphrates; and King Josiah went against him. And Pharaoh Necho killed him at Megiddo when he confronted him. ³⁰ Then his servants moved his body in a chariot from Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in his father's place.

In 605 Nebuchadnezzar defeated Neco at the battle of Carchemish and was on the verge of conquering Judah. Nebopolassar died, and Nebuchadnezzar turned his army back to Babylon to claim the crown before anyone could usurp him. He took back captives, including Daniel, Mishael, Hananiah, and Azariah.

In 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar would return to conquer Judah.

Zephaniah's message is that Judah will fall to Babylon just as Israel has fallen to Assyria, because of their idolatry and sin.

Zephaniah:

His name means “Yahweh hides” or “Yahweh treasures”.

Zephaniah was the great-great grandson of King Hezekiah, one of the great kings of Judah. He was not in line to be king, but was part of the royal family.

Most likely lived in Jerusalem- Zephaniah 1:4.

Nothing more is known of his livelihood or his life.

Outline:²

Main Theological Themes:

1. The Day of the Lord- 1:7, 1:14, 1:15-16, 2:1-5, 3:8. The “Day of the Lord” is both the day when Babylon would destroy Judah, and the day when God would judge all nations.
2. The Remnant- 2:3, 3:14-20. Only a few would escape the judgment of God. The Day of the Lord would not be a day of judgment, but of salvation.

² Taken from Homer Hailey, *Commentary on the Minor Prophets*

I. Judgment on the whole world; Judah in particular (1:2-18)

A. A world judgment (vv. 2-6)

1. Prelude: judgment on the whole world (vv. 2-3)
2. Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem for idolatry (vv. 4-6)

B. Judgment on sinners of every rank (vv. 7-13)

1. On princes (vv. 7-8)
2. On thieves (or idolaters) (v. 9)
3. On traders (vv. 10-11)
4. On indifferent and wealthy (vv. 12-13)

C. The imminence and terrible nature of the judgment (vv. 14-18)

1. Imminent (v. 14)
2. A terribly dark day (vv. 15-17)
3. There will be no deliverance (v. 18)

II Exhortation to repentance and perseverance (2:1- 3:8)

A. Call to repentance, seek the Lord that they may be hidden in the day of the Lord (2:1-3)

B. Reason: God will judge the nations near and far (2:4-15)

1. Judgment upon the nations that are near (vv. 4-11)
 - a) Upon Philistia (vv. 4-7)
 - b) Upon Moab and Ammon (vv. 8-10)
 - c) Upon all the gods of the earth (v. 11)
2. Judgment upon powerful nations afar (vv. 12-15)
 - a) Upon Ethiopia (v. 12)
 - b) Upon Assyria and Ninevah (vv. 13-15)

C. If God punishes the heathen, He will not spare Judah (3:1-8)

1. Woe to the polluted city . classes of sinners and sin (vv. 1-7)

- a) Princes, judges, prophets, priests (vv .1-4)
- b) Jehovah's constant reminder of His sovereignty (vv. 5-7)
- 2. God has called; they have refused . therefore, Woe! (v. 8)

III After the judgment, salvation and glorification for the remnant (3:9-20)

- A. From among the heathen will God's remnant come (vv. 9-10)
- B. Israel restored will be cleansed and sanctified (vv. 11-13)
- C. Israel comforted and exalted to honor (vv. 14-20)

Habakkuk

Political/Cultural Context:

No clear date. Like Nahum, no king is mentioned, so no clear reference point exists.

Babylon is expanding westward toward Judah (1:6). This would be after the fall of Ninevah in 612 B.C. Babylon has not yet reached Judah (3:6).

A reasonable estimate for the date of Habakkuk is after the Battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. Babylon is rising, but has not yet conquered Judah.

Prophesied during the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah (609-589 B.C.). Jehoiakim was a wicked king and served as a vassal to Egypt. 2 Kings 23:35-37:

So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give money according to the command of Pharaoh; he exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, from every one according to his assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Necho. ³⁶Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebudah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. ³⁷And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

Habakkuk:

The last prophet of the divided kingdom.

Name means “embrace”.

Does not talk to Judah about God, so much as he talks to God about Judah.

Most obscure of all minor prophets. Nothing is known of his lineage, hometown, occupation, or location.

Outline:³

Main Theological Theme: The Just Shall Live by Faith- 2:4

Repeated in the New Testament 3 times: Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38.

I God's judgment upon Judah, the wicked people of God, through the Babylonians (1:2 - 2:3)

A. First perplexity, and Jehovah's reply (1:2-11)

1. The prophet's lamentation over the rule of wickedness and violence (vv. 2-4)

Perplexity: How can Jehovah justify His indifference in the presence of wickedness and violence?

2. Jehovah's reply: He is not indifferent; He will raise up the Babylonians to execute His judgment (vv. 5-11)

a) Their rise is of Jehovah (vv. 5-6)

b) Their character is of themselves (vv. 7-11)

B. Second perplexity, and Jehovah's reply (1:12 - 2:3)

1. How can a holy God employ an impure and godless agent? (1:12-17)

a) The confident hope that God's people will not perish (v. 12)

b) Perplexity: God's use of so wicked a nation as Babylon (vv. 13-17)

³ Taken from Homer Hailey, *Commentary on the Minor Prophets*

2. Jehovah's reply: The judgment is sure, but not immediate (2:1-3)

a) The prophet's decision (v. 1)

b) The command: write plainly, for the promise is certain (vv. 2-3)

II God's judgment upon the Babylonians, the ungodly world power (2:4-20)

A. Fundamental principle in world government (2:4-5)

1. The righteous live by faith (v. 4)

2. The wicked- drunken on pride, power, greed-will not continue (v. 5)

B. Woes upon the Babylonians: a taunt song (2:6-20)

1. Woe upon lust of conquest and plunder (vv. 6-8)

2. Woe upon building an empire through cruelty and godless gain (vv. 9-11)

3. Woe upon building cities with blood (vv. 12-14)

4. Woe upon cruelty in the treatment of conquered kings and nations (vv. 15-17)

5. Woe upon idolatry (vv. 18-20)

III Prayer for compassion in the midst of judgment (3:1-19)

A. Petition (3:1-2)

1. Title: author and melody (v. 1)

2. Revive Your works (v. 2a)

3. In wrath remember mercy (v. 2b)

B. The mighty works of Jehovah in the past: judgment and salvation (3:3-15)

1. Jehovah's terrible approach (vv. 3-7)
2. Question: Why did Jehovah appear? (vv. 8-12)
3. Answer: For the salvation of His people (vv. 9-15)

C. Implicit confidence in Jehovah, the God of salvation (3:16-19)

1. Fear and trembling at the tribulation (vv. 16-17)
2. Joy and confident trust (vv. 18-19)

WEEK 4

HaggaiPolitical/Cultural Context:

- In 586 B.C. the Babylonians conquered Judah.
- In 539 B.C. the Persians conquered Babylon.
- Cyrus, king of Persia, issued a decree that permitted Jews to return to Judah.
- Some Jews returned, while others stayed where they had been relocated or born.
- A recent example- After the emancipation of American slaves, some returned to Africa and founded the nation of Liberia. Many more remained in the United States.
- Those who returned with Ezra set about rebuilding the temple.
- Zerubbabel the effort to rebuild the foundation of the temple. He was a descendant of David, and a grandson of Jehoiachin, king of Judah.
- The foundation was laid within a year, but local people opposed the work, and building stopped for 17 years, despite Zerubbabel's efforts.
- The temple was known as Zerubbabel's temple, or the second temple.
- Darius replaced Cyrus as King of Persia.
- God raised up Haggai and Zechariah to inspire the people to build the temple and restore the worship of God.

Structure:

Haggai is divided into five sections, each marked out by a date. All prophecies are given during the second year of the Persian king Darius.

1. 2nd year, 6th month, 1st. day – Haggai 1:1-11
 - a. God rebukes His people because His house is not built.
 - i. The people said it was not the right time, but it was the right time to build their own houses.
 - ii. They had made significant investments in their own homes and livelihoods, but ignored the house of God.
 - iii. They gave money, but did not give themselves.
 - b. God has frustrated their expectations because they did not tend to His house.
 - i. Inflation has destroyed their wages.
 - ii. Their work produced little profit.
 - iii. Contrast with the children of Israel, whose sandals did not wear out in the wilderness.
2. 2nd year, 6th month, 24th day. – Haggai 1:12-15
 - a. Response to God's rebuke: Zerubbabel, the local governor, leads the building effort.
 - b. Joshuah, the high priest, assists him.
3. 2nd year, 7th month, 21st day – Haggai 2:1-9
 - a. God's promise to Israel: The temple would be the presence of God.
 - b. The “desired of all nations” would come into the temple- the Messiah would come to the temple they built.
 - c. This would be fulfilled by Christ.
 - i. The temple Jesus preached in was called the “Third Temple”, or “Herod's Temple”. Herod renovated and enlarged the temple

that Zerubbabel built. But the foundations were the same.

4. 2nd. year, 9th month, 24th day – Haggai 2:10-19

- a. God's blessings depend on holiness.
- b. Sin is contagious, but holiness is not.
- c. People must actively pursue holiness or they will revert to a default position of sinfulness.

5. 2nd year, 9th month, 24th day – Haggai 2:20-23

- a. Assurance of God's grace.
- b. Zerubbabel was a descendant of Jesus in Matthew 1.
- c. God had promised David that a king from his line would rule Israel forever- 2 Samuel 7:16.
- d. Jehoiachin was such an evil king that God wanted to cast him away forever -Jeremiah 22:24-30.
- e. Zerubbabel was a wise and godly ruler- though not a king- and God honored His promise to David through Zerubbabel.

Zechariah

Political/Cultural Context:

- After the fall of Judah to Babylon, the Jews had instituted four annual fasts to remember the events surrounding the exile.
 1. 4th month to remember the conquest of Jerusalem,
 2. the 5th month to remember the destruction of Jerusalem,
 3. the 7th month for the murder of Gedaliah,
 4. 10th month for the siege of Jerusalem (see Zechariah 7:18-19)

- In Zechariah's time, they had grown tired of keeping these fasts.
- God rebukes them and tells them through Zechariah that they found these fasts burdensome because they never fasted for Him, but only for religious formality- 7:4-6

Zechariah:

- A prophet and priest. One of the first Jews to return to Jerusalem from Babylon.

Structure:

- The most obscure of the minor prophets. Consists of visions interpreted by an angel.
- Zechariah 1:7-6:8 contains eight visions which Zechariah did not understand. He questions the meaning, so God sends an angel to interpret.
- New Testament authors understood Zechariah's visions as referring to Christ. Zechariah is quoted 71 times in the New Testament.
- Zechariah is divided into seven sections. Each section is introduced by the expression: "The Word of the Lord came to Zechariah..."
 - 1:1-6 – A call to return to God.
 - 2) 1:7-6:8 – Visions for the future
 - 3) 6:9 - 15 – Israel's future Messiah: Priest and King.
 - 4) 7:1 - 8:23 – The day of the Lord
 - 5) 9:1 - 11:3 – God's zeal for Zion
 - 6) 11:4 - 17 – God's People must repent and change.
 - 7) 12:1 - 14:21 – The Destruction of God's enemies and His eternal reign.

Zechariah's Visions:

1. The horseman among the trees- 1:7-17
 - a. The horseman has been wandering the earth, and has found peace.
 - b. Israel will be permitted to return to Palestine.
2. The four horns and four craftsmen- 1:18-21
 - a. Four kingdoms which oppose Israel- Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, Persia
 - b. The craftsmen will throw down the horns- they will defeat Israel's enemies.
3. The surveyor- 2:1-13
 - a. The surveyor is measuring the boundaries of Jerusalem.
 - b. God will rebuild His city and His temple.
4. Joshua the high priest- 3:1-10
 - a. Joshua stands before the Angel of the Lord, dressed in filthy rags.
 - b. Satan stands at his right hand to accuse him. God rebukes Satan.
 - c. Joshua is given new, clean clothes and a new turban.
 - d. The priesthood will return, purified and ready to lead the nation to God.
5. The golden lampstand and two olive trees- 4:1-14

- a. A vision of the word of God to Zerubbabel. God will raise him up to complete his work.
- b. This vision contains two well-known Bible verses:
 - i. Vs. 6- *Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, 'Says the LORD of hosts.*
 - ii. Vs. 10- *For who has despised the day of small things?*

6. The flying scroll- 5:1-4

- a. The judgment of God on those who disobey His law.
- b. The scroll is a curse that will remain and consume the lawless.

7. The woman in the basket- 5:5-11

- a. The woman represents the sins of Israel.
- b. The woman is carried away by winged stork-women to Shinar (Babylon).

8. The four chariots- 6:1-8

- a. Four chariots pulled by horses.
- b. They go to the four corners of the earth, bringing God's judgment on the nations.
- c. They give rest to God's Spirit- that is, they appease His wrath by judging sin.

Malachi

Social/Political Context:

Some of the captives have returned to Jerusalem to rebuild.

Malachi probably corresponds to Nehemiah. He may have prophesied between Nehemiah's first and second terms as governor.

- The walls were completed in 445 B.C. – Nehemiah 6:15. Malachi does not mention the construction of the walls, so they were probably finished by the time he wrote.
- Malachi rebukes the Jews for intermarrying with pagans, which Nehemiah also addressed during his second term- Nehemiah 13:23-31
- Thus, Malachi probably wrote sometime between 432 and 425 B.C.

Zechariah had prophesied about a coming Messiah. When the Messiah did not come immediately, the people became complacent. God sent Malachi to rouse them from their spiritual lethargy and call them to obedience.

Malachi:

Nothing is known of him. He is not named in the New Testament. His name appears in Scripture only in Malachi 1:1.

Outline:⁴

I. Condemnation of the priests. faithlessness (1:2 . 2:9)

A. Yahweh's love for Israel (1:2-5)

1. The Divine love asserted (v. 2)
2. The Divine love demonstrated (vv. 3-5)

B. Rebuke of the faithless priests and people (1:6-14)

1. Worthlessness of the peoples' sacrifices (vv. 6-8)
2. Better to close the temple (vv. 9-10)

⁴ Adapted from Homer Hailey, *Commentary on the Minor Prophets*

3. A superior service rendered among the Gentiles (vv. 11-13)

4. The curse of Yahweh (v. 14)

C. Curse pronounced upon the faithless priests (2:1-9)

1. Immediate reformation the only way of escape (vv. 1-4)

2. Covenant with Levi and the ideal priest (vv. 5-7)

3. The apostate priests and their disgrace (vv. 8-9)

II Condemnation of divorce and mixed marriages (2:10-16)

III Day of the Lord. Condemnation of religious indifference and skepticism (2:17 .

4:6)

A. Yahweh's approach in judgment (2:17-3:6)

1. Their question, .Where is the God of justice?. (2:17)

2. Yahweh's appearance as a refining fire (3:1-2)

3. Purification of priests and people (3:3-5)

4. Yahweh's unchangeableness (3:6)

B. Wrongful withholding of tithes and offerings (3:7-12)

1. The people.s fickleness and Yahweh's curse (3:7-9)

2. Yahweh's bountiful reward for their respect and faithful discharge
of duty (3:10-12)

C. New defense of Yahweh's justice (3:13 -4:3)

1. Complaint: the wicked prosper, the righteous suffer (3:13-15)

2. Separation of the pious from the wicked (3:16-18)

3. Utter destruction of the wicked (4:1)

4. Exaltation and glorification of the righteous (4:2-3)

D. Closing admonitions (4:4-6)

1. Exhortation to faithful observance of the law (4:4)

2. Elijah the messenger and his work of preparation (4:5-6)

WEEK FIVE

Joel

Social/Political Context:

The date is not known. Joel is associated with the minor prophets, but he may have been much earlier than the others.

Joel discusses the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” or “Valley of Decision”. This is a prominent geographical feature of Joel’s prophecy. It is not a known location. It is perhaps used symbolically, rather than geographically. “Jehoshaphat” means “God judges”.

- Jehoshaphat is a king of Israel. He reigned for 25 years, from 872 to 848 B.C.
- 15 chapters of the Old Testament discuss his reign- I Kings 15 through 2 Kings 8.
- Only Hezekiah gets more historical coverage in Chronicles than Jehoshaphat.

Joel does not mention Babylon or Assyria at all. He does mention the Phoenicians, Philistines, Edomites, and Egyptians, who factor into the reign of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:4, 19).

Egypt attacked Judah during the time of Rehoboam, grandson of Solomon (1 Kings 14:25-27)

Jehoshaphat was the great-great grandson of Solomon. He brought relative peace and prosperity to Judah. His son, Jehoram, ruled poorly and was followed by Hezekiah, one of the greatest kings in the history of Judah.

Joel:

“Joel” is a common name throughout the Old Testament. The author of Joel is not known in any other context.

The name “Joel” means “Yahweh is God”. It would have been pronounced “yo-el”.

Content:

Joel discusses the “Day of the Lord” more than any other book in the Bible. Joel’s prophecy is about judgment day. Thus, the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” may be a

reference to the valley of Megiddo, where Armageddon will be fought, or it may be symbolic of judgment.

Outline:

- A) Tragedy in Judah 1:13-20.
- B) More tragedy will come- the invading armies of God. 2:1-11
- C) Judah must repent or God will judge. 2:12-17
- D) God will bless Judah when she repents. 2:18-32
- E) The judgment of God will fall on the nations who have opposed Judah. This judgment will occur in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.
 - 1) God threatens- 3:1-8
 - 2) God taunts- 3:9-11
 - 3) God judges- 3:12-16
 - 4) God promises- 3:17-21

The Day of the Lord in Joel:

*1:15- Alas for the day!
For the day of the LORD is at hand;
It shall come as destruction from the Almighty.*

*2:1-2- Blow the trumpet in Zion,
And sound an alarm in My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble;
For the day of the LORD is coming,
For it is at hand:
A day of darkness and gloominess,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
Like the morning clouds spread over the mountains.
A people come, great and strong,
The like of whom has never been;
Nor will there ever be any such after them,
Even for many successive generations.*

2:11- *The LORD gives voice before His army,
For His camp is very great;
For strong is the One who executes His word.
For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible;
Who can endure it?*

2:30-32- *"And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth:
Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.
The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.
And it shall come to pass
That whoever calls on the name of the LORD
Shall be saved.
For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance,
As the LORD has said,
Among the remnant whom the LORD calls.*

3:14-16- *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!
For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.
The sun and moon will grow dark,
And the stars will diminish their brightness.
The LORD also will roar from Zion,
And utter His voice from Jerusalem;
The heavens and earth will shake;
But the LORD will be a shelter for His people,
And the strength of the children of Israel.*

3:18- *And it will come to pass in that day
That the mountains shall drip with new wine,
The hills shall flow with milk,
And all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water;
A fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD
And water the Valley of Acacias.*

Obadiah

Social/Political Context:

Jerusalem was plundered by Arabian and Philistine raiders during the reign of Jehoram (850-843 B.C.) This is recorded in 2 Chronicles 21:16-17. Obadiah 11 records that Edom stood by and even participated.

Obadiah:

Name means “servant of God”.

Shortest book in the Old Testament, and one of the most difficult to date.

Theories of date: 845 B.C. or 586 B.C.

- 845 B.C.- Obadiah refers to Ephriam, a euphemism for the northern kingdom of Israel. Before the fall of Israel. Edom participated in raid on Jerusalem just before this time. This date is more likely.
- 586 B.C.- the invasion of Judah by Babylon.

Content:

Obadiah prophesies against the Edomites. These are descended from Esau.

The Edomites and the Jews have a long history of conflict:

- Rivalry between Jacob and Esau- Genesis 25:23; 27:41
- Edom refuses passage on the way to Canaan- Numbers 20:14-21
- David punishes Edom- 2 Samuel 8:13-14
- Edom revolts under king Jehoram- 2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chronicles 21:8-10

Essence of the prophecy: Zion will be exalted over mount Seir. The Savior will judge the mountains of Esau from Mt Zion.

This has messianic undertones. The Messiah will come to Zion and save the world.