
a *Grace Notes* course

Foundations 200

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Foundations 206

Old Testament Survey: Hosea to Malachi

Grace Notes

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The Minor Prophets

The Term "Minor Prophets"

The common title for these twelve books of the Bible is the "Minor Prophets." This title originated in the late fourth century AD. These prophets are minor only in that they are each much shorter than the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (called "Major Prophets"). In Old and New Testament times, the Old Testament was called "The Law and the Prophets."

The Origin Of The Prophetic Office

The prophetic office found its origin in God's purpose for Israel as a nation through whom all the nations could be blessed. When God gave Israel the Law, He promised them that if they would be obedient, they would become "**My own possession**" (a special treasure of His) for the purpose of becoming a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" among all the nations (Exodus 19:5-6 cf. Deuteronomy 4:6-8). This purpose could not happen, however, if they followed the beliefs and ways of other nations. In preparation for their entrance into the land just before the death of Moses, the unlawful and demonic methods used by the nations to discern the future or the divine will, called divination, was thoroughly condemned by the Lord through Moses (Deuteronomy 18:9-14). So how, then, was God's will to be known? The true and lawful means by which God's will would be delivered to His people is given in the very next verses in Deuteronomy 18:15-22,

"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, lest I die.' "And the LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well. I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will

require it of him. But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' ***"And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' 'When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.'"***

This revelation forms the Biblical origin and reason for the prophetic office. Furthermore, so that the nation might fulfill God's purposes as stated in the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3), He gave them specific promises and warnings. These are spelled out in Deuteronomy 28-30 in the blessings and curses of these chapters (sometimes referred to as the Palestinian Covenant). For obedience there would be blessing, but if they disobeyed, there would be cursing. So how did the prophets fit into the picture? They would come along and say, "***Because you broke the covenant, the covenant curses have fallen upon you, or are about to fall upon you.***" In other words, it has happened (or is about to) just as God warned you in Deuteronomy 28-30. The prophets' messages of sin and judgment must be seen in the light of this background and understanding of the Old Testament.

The prophets did not proclaim only warnings, but also a message of salvation and the coming glory of the Lord. Ultimately, God's purposes would be fulfilled by the sovereign work of God in the lives of His people. Sometimes these salvation messages described a particular event which they had seen in a vision (Daniel 9:24-27 and the 70th week). Other times they were claiming and proclaiming the promises of God given to men such as Abraham and David.

Literary Features Of The Minor Prophets

When we study all of the prophets we find they all have the same basic ingredients: (1) warning of judgment because of the nations' sinfulness; (2) a description of the sin; (3) a description of the

coming judgment; (4) a call for repentance; and (4) a promise of future deliverance.

The key to outlining a prophetic book is to recognize where one unit of thought begins and another ends.¹ The prophets used an introductory statement like “This is what the Lord says ” and then ended a section with the same word or phrase.

CHRONOLOGY OVERVIEW

The Order Of The Minor Prophets In The English Bible

1. Hosea	4. Obadiah	7. Nahum	10. Haggai
2. Joel	5. Jonah	8. Habakkuk	11. Zechariah
3. Amos	6. Micah	9. Zephaniah	12. Malachi

Their Grouping According to the Exile and The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah

Group	Book	Approximate Dates (BC)
PRE-EXILIC Prophets of Israel	Jonah Amos Hosea	780-850 765-750 755-715
Prophets of Judah	Obadiah Joel Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah	840 835-796 740-690 630-612 606-604 625
POST-EXILIC Prophets of the Returned Remnant	Haggai Zechariah Malachi	520 515 430

Hosea

(Persevering Love)

Author and Name of the Book

As declared in verse 1, the author is Hosea, the son of Beeri and the husband of Gomer (1:3). He was apparently a citizen of northern Israel since his concern was for the Northern Kingdom of Israel and he called the king of Samaria “our king” (7:5).

¹ Hebrew class at Dallas Theological Seminary taught by Dr. Robert Chisholm, Spring 1993.

All we know about Hosea we learn from the book itself.

The book is named after its author, Hosea and is identical to the last king of the Northern Kingdom, Hoshea. For purposes of distinction, the Bible always gives the name of the minor prophet as Hosea. Interestingly, the names Hosea, Joshua and Jesus are all derived from the same Hebrew word, *HOSHEA*, which means “salvation.” However, both the names Joshua and Jesus include the additional truth that, “Yahweh is salvation.” As God’s messenger, Hosea offers salvation to the nation if they will turn from their idolatry and return to the Lord.

Date of Writing

According to 1:1, Hosea ministered during the days of Uzziah (767-739 BC), Jotham (739-731 BC), Ahaz (731-715 BC), and Hezekiah (715-686 BC), who were Kings of Judah. He also ministered during the days of Jeroboam II (782-752 BC), a king of Israel.

Hosea’s ministry spanned several decades, beginning near the end of the reigns of Uzziah of Judah (790-739 BC) and Jeroboam II of Israel (793-753 BC) and concluding in the early years of Hezekiah’s reign. The latter’s rule began around 715 BC after a period of vice-regency (ruling at the same time) with his father Ahaz. Since Israel was Hosea’s primary audience, it seems strange that four Judean kings, but only one Israelite king, are mentioned in 1:1. The reason for the omission of the six Israelite kings who followed Jeroboam II is uncertain. Perhaps it suggests the legitimacy of the Davidic dynasty (3:5) in contrast with the instability and disintegration (falling apart) of the kingship in the North (7:3-7).²

Perhaps also, the six other Kings in Israel who followed Jeroboam II were omitted because of their relative insignificance, yet each of these continued in the sin of the Jeroboam I, son of Nebat. In essence, there were no good Kings in the Northern Kingdom of Israel who instituted

² John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1983,1985, electronic media.

reforms as there were in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Theme and Purpose

Hosea was written to demonstrate the steadfast or unflinching love of God for Israel in spite of her continued unfaithfulness. Through Hosea's marital experience, the book shows us the heart of a loving and compassionate God who longs to bless His people with the knowledge of Himself and all that knowing God intimately can mean to man. In keeping with this purpose, the theme of Hosea is a strong testimony against the Northern Kingdom because it had been unfaithful to its covenant relationship with the Lord, as demonstrated in its widespread corruption in moral life both publicly and privately. Thus, the prophet seeks to get his countrymen to repent and return to their patient and loving God. This is presented from the standpoint of God's love to Israel as His own dear children and as His covenant wife.

Key People

Hosea, Gomer and Jehu, King of Israel.

Christ as Seen in HOSEA

In Hosea, Messiah is presented as the Son of God (11:1 cf. Matthew 2:15), as the only Savior of His people (13:4 cf. John 14:6), as the One who will ransom us from the dead (13:14 cf. 1 Corinthians 15:55), as the One who loves us with great compassion (11:4), and as the One who heals those who will return to Him (6:1).

Outline

1. Introduction. (1:1)

2. Hosea's Marriage: A Portrait Of God's Dealings With Israel. (1:2-3:5)

A. The Prophetic Nature Of Hosea's Family. (1:2-2:1)

- 1). Hosea's Marriage: Israel's Unfaithfulness. (1:2-3a)
- 2). Hosea's Children: Israel's Judgment. (1:3b-9)
- 3). Israel's Future: Restoration. (1:10-2:1)

B. Restoration Through Punishment. (2:2-23)

- 1). The Lord's Punishment Of Israel. (2:2-13)
- 2). The Lord's Restoration Of Israel. (2:14-23)

C. Restoration Of Hosea's Marriage. (3:1-5)

1). The Divine Command. (3:1)

2). Hosea's Obedient Response. (3:2-3)

3). The Illustration Explained. (3:4-5)

3. Hosea's Message: The Judgment And Restoration Of Israel. (4:1-14:9)

A. The Lord's Case Against Israel. (4:1-6:3)

- 1). Israel's Guilt Exposed. (4:1-19)
- 2). Israel's Judgment Announced. (5:1-14)
- 3). Israel's Restoration Prophesied. (5:15-6:3)

B. The Lord's Case Against Israel Enlarged. (6:4-11:11)

- 1). Israel's Guilt And Punishment. (6:4-8:14)
- 2). Israel's Guilt And Punishment Restated. (9:1-11:7)
- 3). The Lord's Compassion Renewed. (11:8-11)

C. The Lord's Case Against Israel Concluded. (11:12-14:9)

- 1). A Concluding Accusation. (11:12-13:16)
- 2). A Concluding Exhortation. (14:1-9)

Joel

(The Coming of the Day of Yahweh)

Author and Name of the Book

As indicated by 1:1, the author is Joel, which means "Yahweh is God." We know nothing else about him other than the name of his father, Pethuel (1:1).

This name is appropriate in view of the message of Joel, which lays stress on God as the Sovereign One who has all creation and the nations under His power and control as the God of History.

Date of Writing

835-796 BC

Since the date is not specified within the book by any time references, we have to determine the date as much as possible from the internal evidences we find in the book and connecting them to known events. People have suggested dates from 835-400 BC, but determining the date is difficult. We date it here from 835-796 BC due to its references to Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, Egypt and Edom as enemies (3:4,19). These were the early enemies of the

Southern Kingdom, before their exile into Babylon. After the exile their enemies would have been Assyria, Babylonia and Persia.

Theme and Purpose

Joel uses a recent drought and locust plague that strikes Judah without warning as an object lesson to warn of a future invasion of Israel in the Day of Yahweh. In just a very short time, a matter of hours, every piece of vegetation is stripped bare. If the nation will repent and return to the Lord, God will restore His relationship with her and bless her. This was true in the historical situation in which Joel was writing and will be true any time in the future.

For the ultimate blessings and restoration promised by Joel to occur, the Jews will have to experience the judgments of the Tribulation and the outpouring of the Spirit of God. It is this combination that will cause them to return to the Lord.

Key People

Joel

Christ as Seen in JOEL

In Joel, Christ is presented as the One who will give the Holy Spirit (2:28 cf. John 16:7-15; Acts 1:8), who judges the nations (3:2, 12), and who is the refuge and stronghold of Israel (3:16).

Outline

1. The Historic Day Of The Lord. (1:1-20)

- A. The Historic Occurrence Of Locust. (1:1-12)
- B. The Historic Occurrence Of Drought. (1:13-20)

2. The Prophetic Day Of The Lord. (2:1-3:21)

- A. The Imminency Of The Day Of The Lord. (2:1-27)
 - 1). The Prophecy Of An Invasion Of Judah. (2:1-11)
 - 2). The Condition Needed For The Salvation Of Judah. (2:12-27)
- B. The Ultimate Day Of The Lord. (2:28-3:21)
 - 1). The Final Events Before The Day Of The Lord. (2:28-32)
 - 2). The Events Of The Day Of The Lord. (3:1-21)

Amos

(Judgment for Abused Privilege)

Author and Name of the Book

Unlike Isaiah (who was a man of the court) and Jeremiah (who was a priest) this book was written by Amos, a herdsman and a tender of sycamore fruit (1:1; 7:14). He was from Tekoa, which was located near Bethlehem about ten miles south of Jerusalem. Though he was a farmer and rancher he was very familiar with the Word of God.

The name Amos is the Hebrew word which means “burden” or “Burden-bearer.” This is fitting for the burden given to him. Although Amos came from the Southern Kingdom of Judah rather than from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, he was given the burden of carrying a message of warning against the greed, injustice, worldliness, and self-righteousness of the Northern Kingdom. Amos should not be confused with Amoz, the father of Isaiah (Isaiah 1:1).

Date of Writing

About 760 BC

According to verse 1, Amos tells us that he was a contemporary of Uzziah and Jeroboam II and prophesied “*in the days of Uzziah, King of Judah (790-739 BC), and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, King of Israel (793-753 BC), two years before the earthquake*” (1:1). Amos probably prophesied in the period from 767-753 BC. We are also told that he prophesied “*two years before the earthquake,*” but the precise date of this event is not known.

Theme and Purpose

The divine message given to Amos was primarily one of judgment, though it ends with words of hope. Amos warned that the Lord God, the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, would come as a Warrior to judge the nations that had rebelled against His authority. Israel in particular would be punished for her violations against God’s covenant. Amos sought to bring the prosperous and materialistic northern tribes under Jeroboam to repentance as the only escape from imminent judgment. In the process, the book demonstrates God’s hatred of evil because of His holiness and

that His justice must act against Israel's sin for He cannot allow it to go unpunished.

However, even though the nation would be destroyed, God would still preserve a repentant small group of Israelites (often referred to as the "remnant"). One day this small group would be restored to their covenant blessing and political prominence when the Lord would then also draw all nations to Himself.

Key People

Amos, Uzziah, King of Judah, Jeroboam, King of Israel.

Christ as Seen in AMOS

Amos presents Christ as the One who will rebuild David's dynasty (9:11) and as the One who will restore His people (9:11-15).

Outline

1. The Introduction: The Author And Theme. (1:1-2)

2. The Eight Judgments Of Amos. (1:3-2:16)

A. Concerning Damascus. (1:3-5)

B. Concerning Philistia. (1:6-8)

C. Concerning Tyre. (1:9-10)

D. Concerning Edom. (1:11-12)

E. Concerning Ammon. (1:13-15)

F. Concerning Moab. (2:1-3)

G. Concerning Judah. (2:4-5)

H. Concerning Israel. (2:6-16)

3. The Sermons Of Amos. (3:1-6:14)

A. The Doom Of Israel. (3:1-15)

B. The Depravity Of Israel. (4:1-13)

C. A Funeral Song Over Israel. (5:1-6:14)

D. The Ruin Of Israel In Coming Judgment. (5:1-17)

E. The Rebuke Of Religious People. (5:18-27)

F. The Reprimand Of The Entire Nation. (6:1-14)

4. The Five Visions Of Amos. (7:1-9:15)

A. A Vision Of Devouring Locusts. (7:1-3)

B. A Vision Of Fire. (7:4-6)

C. A Vision Of A Measuring Line. (7:7-9)

D. An Historical Interlude: Opposition From The Priest Of Bethel. (7:10-17)

E. A Vision Of A Basket Of Summer Fruit. (8:1-14)

F. A Vision Of The Lord Judging. (9:1-10)

5. The Five Promise Of Restoration For Israel. (9:11-15)

Obadiah

(Poetic Justice)

Author and Name of the Book

The author is an unknown prophet of Judah by the name of Obadiah (1:1). His name means "servant or worshipper of Yahweh."

A number of Old Testament men were named Obadiah. These include an officer in David's army (1 Chronicles 12:9), Ahab's servant who hid God's prophets (1 Kings 18:3), a Levite in the days of Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:12), and a leader who returned from the Exile with Ezra (Ezra 8:9). Nothing is known of Obadiah's home town or family and the fact that his father is not named suggests that he was not out of a kingly or priestly line.

Date of Writing

The shortest book of the Bible, containing only 21 verses, bears the distinction of being the most difficult of the Minor Prophets to date. We date Obadiah around 840 BC due to the prophecy against Edom by the Philistines and Arabians which seems to be during the reign of Jehoram, from 848-841 BC (2 Chronicles 21:16-17);

Theme and Purpose

The theme of Obadiah is a reiteration of the truth that pride goes before a fall. Obadiah declares that Edom stands judged because of her pride in rejoicing over the evil that happened to Jerusalem.

Key People

Obadiah

Christ as Seen in OBADIAH

Christ is seen in Obadiah as the judge of the nations (15-16), the Savior of Israel (17-20), and the Possessor of the kingdom (21).³

Outline

1. The Prophecies Of Judgment On Edom. (1:1-9)

- A. The Certainty Of Judgment. (1:1-4)
- B. The Completeness Of The Judgment. (1:5-9)

2. The Basis For The Judgment On Edom. (1:10-14)

- A. For An Absence Of Brotherly Love. (1:10)
- B. For Arrogance. (1:11-12)
- C. For Aggressiveness. (1:13-14)

3. The Time Of The Judgment. (1:15)

4. The Results Of The Judgment. (1:16-18)

5. The Deliverance Of Israel. (1:19-21)

Jonah

(Fleeing From God's Will)

Author and Name of the Book

The author of the book is Jonah, the son of Amittai, a prophet from Galilee in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. This is evidenced by the book itself (1:1), the historical character of the book which names real places and persons, and by validation from other sources (2 Kings 14:25) including the testimony of Jesus in the New Testament (Matthew 12:40). His name means "dove."

Date of Writing

793-753 BC

In 2 Kings 14:27 Jonah is connected with the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (793-753 BC). Jonah ministered after the time of Elisha and just before the time of Amos and Hosea.

Theme and Purpose

Jonah clearly demonstrates that the God of the Hebrews (1) has concern for the whole world for salvation is offered to all who repent and turn to Him,(2) is sovereign over nature and all human

affairs and (3) unloving attitudes about different races can hinder us from following the will of God.

Key People

Jonah

Christ as Seen in JONAH

Through Jonah, Christ is portrayed in His resurrection (Matthew 12:40), as a prophet to the nations (although He was not reluctant like Jonah), and as the Savior of the nations. In Jonah's life, Christ is seen as the Savior and Lord (2:9).

Outline

1. The Fleeing Of Jonah. (1:1-17)

- A. The Reason For His Flight. (1:1-2)
- B. The Route Of His Flight. (1:3)
- C. The Results Of His Flight. (1:4-17)

2. The Praying Of Jonah. (2:1-10)

- A. The Characteristics Of His Prayer. (2:1-9)
- B. The Answer To His Prayer. (2:10)

3. The Preaching Of Jonah. (3:1-10)

- A. God's Command To Preach. (3:1-3)
- B. The Content Of Jonah's Preaching. (3:4)
- C. The Consequences Of Jonah's Preaching. (3:5-10)

4. The Learning Of Jonah. (4:1-11)

- A. Jonah's Complaint To God. (4:1-3)
- B. God's Curriculum For Jonah. (4:4-11)

Micah

(Who Is Like God?)

Author and Name of the Book

The book takes its name from its author, Micah the prophet. Little is known about the author of this book other than what can be learned from the book itself and from Jeremiah 26:18. The name Micah is a shortened form of Micaiah, which means "Who is like Yahweh?" Micah suggests this truth in 7:18 when he said, "Who is a God like You?" In Jeremiah's day the elders referred to Micah and quoted Micah 3:12 in defense of Jeremiah's

³ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 252.

message of judgment on the nation (Jeremiah 26:18).

Micah was from Moresheth (Micah 1:1 cf. 1:14), a town in Judea about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem near the Philistine city of Gath. Moresheth was located in Judah's fertile foothills near Lachish, an international trading town.

Date of Writing

700 BC

Micah tells us in verse 1 that he prophesied during the days of Jotham (750-732 BC), Ahaz (736-716 BC) and Hezekiah (716-687 BC). Micah speaks primarily to Judah, but since he also speaks to the Northern Kingdom of Israel and predicts the fall of Samaria (1:6), a good part of his ministry occurred before the Assyrian captivity in 722 BC, probably around 700 BC

Theme and Purpose

Micah shows how the people had failed to live up to the covenant conditions that God had made with Israel in which there would be blessing for obedience (Deuteronomy 28:1-14), cursing for disobedience and eventual removal from the land of promise (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). In the process, Micah exposed the injustice of Judah and declared the righteousness and justice of Yahweh showing He was just in disciplining them. He brings charges against Israel and Judah for sins like oppression, bribery among the judges, prophets, and priests, and for covetousness, cheating, pride, and violence. Of course, this discipline on the nation demonstrated God's love for them and that He would restore them.

The theme of judgment is prominent in each of Micah's three messages, but he also stressed the truth of restoration. Further, Micah referred to the principle of the remnant in each of his messages (Micah 2:12; 4:7; 5:7-8; 7:18). He declared that in the future Yahweh would restore the people of Israel to a place of prominence in the world under the coming Messiah.

The closing section of Micah describes a courtroom scene. God has a controversy against His people, and He calls the mountains and hills together to form the jury as He sets forth His case. The people have replaced heartfelt worship with empty ritual, thinking that this is all God demands.

They have divorced God's standards of justice from their daily dealings in order to cover their dishonest practices. They have failed to realize what the Lord requires of man. There can only be one verdict: which must be "guilty."

The book closes on a note of hope. The same God who executes judgment also delights to extend mercy. *"Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy"* (7:18). No wonder the prophet exclaims, *"Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me"* (7:7).⁴

Key People

Micah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah

Christ as Seen in MICAH

Micah presents Christ as the God of Jacob (4:2), the Judge of the nations (4:3), and the Ruler who would be born in the city of Bethlehem (5:2 cf. Matthew 2:1-6). The priests and scribes quoted Micah 5:2 in answer to Herod's question about the birthplace of Messiah.

Outline

1. The Introduction. (1:1)

2. First Message: Judgment For Samaria And Judah. (1:1-2:13)

A. Prediction Of Coming Judgment. (1:2-7)

B. Lament Over The People. (1:8-16)

1). Micah's Lament. (1:8-9)

2). Micah's Call For Others To Mourn. (1:10-16)

C. Sins Of Judah. (2:1-11)

1). Sins Of The People. (2:1-5)

2). Sins Of The False Prophets. (2:6-11)

D. Prediction Of Future Regathering. (2:12-13)

3. Second Message: Doom Followed By Deliverance. (3:1-5:15)

A. Judgment On The Nation's Leaders. (3:1-12)

1). Judgment On The Rulers. (3:1-4)

⁴ Ibid., p. 263.

- 2). Judgment On The False Prophets. (3:5-8)
 - 3). Judgment On All The Naive Leaders. (3:9-12)
- B. Kingdom Blessings For The Nation. (4:1-5:15)
- 1). Characteristics Of The Kingdom. (4:1-8)
 - 2). Events Preceding The Kingdom. (4:9-5:1)
 - 3). The Ruler Of The Kingdom. (5:2-15)
- 4. Third Message: Condemnation For Sin And A Promise Of Blessing. (6:1-7:20)**
- A. An Indictment By The Lord. (6:1-5)
- B. The Response Of Micah For The Nation. (6:6-8)
- C. The Lord's Judgment Because Of Sin. (6:9-16)
- 1). The Sins. (6:9-12)
 - 2). The Punishment. (6:13-16)
- D. Micah's Pleading With The Lord. (7:1-20)
- 1). Micah's Sorrow Concerning The Nation's Sins. (7:1-6)
 - 2). Micah's Confidence In The Lord. (7:7-13)
 - 3). Micah's Prayer That God Would Again Shepherd His Flock. (7:14)
 - 4). The Lord's Promise To Show Miraculous Things To His People. (7:15-17)
- E. Micah's Affirmation That God Is Unique. (7:18-20)

Nahum

(The Doom of Nineveh)

Author and Name of the Book

Other than what Nahum tells us in 1:1, that the book is of the vision of Nahum, the Elkoshite and that it is an oracle about Nineveh, we know nothing about this prophet. Nahum means "consolation," but his message was certainly not one of comfort to the wicked Assyrians who occupied Nineveh. It would, however, bring comfort to Judah. He may have been a prophet of Judah in view of 1:15, and though the exact location of Elkosh is uncertain, most conservative scholars believe this city was located somewhere in southern Judah.

As with all the minor prophets, the book gets its name from the prophet who spoke the prophecy.

Date of Writing

663-612 BC

Nahum speaks of the fall of Thebes (located in Egypt) as already past in 3:8-10. Thebes fell in 663 BC. In all three chapters Nahum predicted Nineveh's fall and this occurred in 612 BC. Nahum probably gave his oracle near the end of this time because he discusses the fall of Nineveh as imminent (2:1; 3:14, 19). This would place his ministry sometime during the reign of Josiah and makes him a contemporary of Zephaniah and Jeremiah.

Theme and Purpose

Nahum's theme is the fall of Nineveh as the vengeance of God against the wicked Assyrians of Nineveh. What Jonah wanted to see, namely God's judgment on the Assyrians, was predicted by Nahum approximately one hundred and fifty years later.

The conversion of the Ninevites in response to the preaching of Jonah was evidently short-lived because they soon became ruthless, returning to their former wicked ways. Sargon II of Assyria destroyed Samaria and took the Northern Kingdom of Israel into captivity, scattering the ten tribes in 722 BC. Later, Sennacherib of the Assyrians almost captured Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah in 701 BC. Regardless of its power and prominence, Nineveh is clearly judged as doomed by a Holy God, through the prophet Nahum. Assyria's cruelty, power, and pride would come to an end by the power of God. Though the book focuses on Assyria's fall and judgment, it is written to bring comfort to Judah.

Key People

Nahum

Christ as Seen in NAHUM

While there are no direct Messianic prophecies in Nahum, in keeping with the basic spirit of all prophecy, Christ is pictured as the jealous God and avenger of His adversaries (1:2-13).

Outline

1. The Introduction. (1:1)
2. The Prophecy And Certainty Of God's Judgment On Nineveh. (1:2-15)

A. God's Holy Wrath Against Nineveh. (1:2-8)

B. Nineveh's Scheming Against Yahweh Will Come To An End. (1:9-11)

C. Judah's Affliction Will End Because Of Nineveh's Judgment. (1:12-15)

3. The Description Of God's Judgment On Nineveh. (2:1-13)

A. The Assault Described. (2:1-6)

B. The Defeat Declared. (2:7-13)

4. The Cause For God's Judgment On Nineveh. (3:1-19)

A. Because Of Her Violence And Deceit That Leads To Shame. (3:1-7)

B. Her Treatment Of Thebes (No-Amon) Results In Her Own Defeat. (3:8-11)

C. Her Defenses To Be Useless. (3:12-19)

Habakkuk

(Solution to Confusion)

Author and Name of the Book

The author is identified as Habakkuk in 1:1 and 3:1. He clearly identifies himself as a prophet and the fact that his prayer and praise is concluded with the statement, "*For the choir director, on my stringed instruments*" suggests he had a priestly background.

The book gets its title from the name of the author. Habakkuk comes from a Hebrew word which means "embrace." The prophet clings to Yahweh as the God of his salvation and strength.

Date of Writing

600 BC

Because the book anticipates the coming Babylonian invasion and shows an awareness of the fame of the Babylonians, Habakkuk probably ministered during the reign of Jehoiakim of Judah. It appears that Babylon had not invaded Judah, though it was imminent (1:6; 2:1), which suggests Habakkuk prophesied shortly before Babylon's invasion in 605 BC

Theme and Purpose

The theme of this prophecy flows out of Habakkuk's confusion over the coming invasion

of the wicked Babylonians. It concerns the problems of his faith in the face of two apparent difficulties: (1) Why did God permit the increasing evil in Judah to go unpunished (1:2-4)? And how could a Holy God (1:13) use sinful nations like Babylon as His source of judgment (1:12-2:1)? Habakkuk has trouble understanding these difficulties which are solved in the light of God's continuing revelation, and the prophet closes in a psalm of joyous trust. The book is a defense of God's goodness and power in view of the problem of evil.

Key People

Habakkuk

Christ as Seen in HABAKKUK

Again in the light of the nature of prophecy, Christ is portrayed as the Savior. The word "salvation," which appears three times in 3:13 and 18, is the root word from which the name "Jesus" is derived (Matthew 1:21). He is also seen as the Holy One (1:12 cf. 1 John 1:9), the One who justifies the righteous by faith (2:4), and the One who will one day fill the earth "*with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*" (2:14).

Outline

1. The Confusion Of Habakkuk: Faith Is Tested And Taught. (1:1-2:20)

A. The First Problem: Why Does God Allow Wicked Practices To Continue In Judah? (1:2-4)

B. God's First Answer. (1:5-11)

C. The Second Problem: Why Will God Use Wicked People To Punish Judah? (1:12-2:1)

D. God's Second Answer. (2:2-20)

2. The Praise Of Habakkuk: Faith Is Triumphant. (3:1-19)

A. Praise For God's Person. (3:1-3)

B. Praise For God's Power. (3:4-7)

C. Praise For God's Purpose. (3:8-16)

D. Praise For Faith In God. (3:17-19)

Zephaniah

(Blessing Through Judgment)

Author and Name of the Book

As seen in 1:1, the book was written by Zephaniah, the son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah. In tracing the prophet's ancestry through four generations, this heading is unique. Usually only the prophet's father is identified (Isaiah 1:1; Jeremiah 1:1; Ezekiel 1:3; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1) when the author provides genealogical information. Such a long genealogy suggests the noble birth of the prophet, his great-great-grandfather being the good King Hezekiah.

The book takes its name from the prophet Zephaniah whose name means "hidden of Yahweh" (2:3).

Date of Writing

630-625 BC

According to the introduction (1:10), Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah (640-609 BC). His prophecy preceded the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC and the reforms of Josiah in 622-621 BC. This seems evident since the book of Zephaniah notes the existence of pagan idolatry in Judah (1:4-6) which was mostly eliminated by Josiah's reforms. All this suggests a date between 630 and 625 BC.

Theme and Purpose

The prophet speaks to the people of Judah whose moral and spiritual life had been dulled by the evil influence of the reigns of Manasseh and Amon (3:1-7). Consequently, in keeping with the warnings of cursing for disobedience in Deuteronomy 28, the central theme is that of judgment or the coming of the day of the Lord. In view of Yahweh's holiness, He must vindicate and demonstrate His holiness against sin by calling the nations of the world into account before Him. But God is also a God of mercy and blessing so there is also a strong emphasis and call for repentance with the promise of blessing. Thus, Zephaniah clearly divides into three sections: judgment for sin, a call for repentance, and a promise of future redemption or blessing.

Key People

Zephaniah, Josiah

Christ as Seen in ZEPHANIAH

Though not specifically mentioned in this book, Messiah is presented as the Righteous One within the nation of Israel (3:5) who is also their King (3:15).

Outline

1. Introduction. (1:1)

2. The Judgment Of The Day Of Yahweh. (1:2-3:8)

A. Judgment On The Whole Earth. (1:2-3)

B. Judgment On Judah. (1:4-2:3)

1). The Causes Of Judgment. (1:4-13)

2). The Description Of Judgment. (1:14-18)

3). A Summons To The Nation: Repent And Seek God. (2:1-3)

C. Judgment On The Surrounding Nations. (2:4-15)

1). On Philistia. (2:4-7)

2). On Moab And Ammon. (2:8-11)

3). On Ethiopia. (2:12)

4). On Assyria. (2:13-15)

D. Judgment On Jerusalem. (3:1-7)

1). The Prophet's Indictment. (3:1-5)

2). The Lord's Judgment. (3:6-7)

E. Judgment On All The Earth. (3:8)

3. The Restoration Of The Day Of Yahweh. (3:9-20)

A. The Restoration Of The Nations. (3:9-10)

B. The Restoration Of Israel. (3:11-20)

Haggai

(Encouragement)

INTRODUCTION

With Haggai, we come to the one of the three prophets who wrote after the exile in Babylon. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, all spoke to the Jews who were returned to Israel. Their objective was to encourage the spiritual and moral life of the small group which remained, now back in their homeland, as they sought to rebuild the temple and the nation.

Haggai and Zechariah dealt mostly with the spiritual needs as they related to the rebuilding of the temple and Malachi dealt primarily with the moral and social needs involved with the reconstruction of the nation itself.

Author and Name of the Book

Haggai's name means "festal" or "festive," suggesting to some that he was born on one of the major feast days, though there is nothing in the text to support this. Haggai is known only from this book (mentioned 9 times) and the mention of him in Ezra 5:1-2 and 6:14. Little is known about him. He refers to himself as "the prophet Haggai" (1:1), but nothing is known about his parents or genealogy. He was a contemporary of Zechariah the prophet and Zerubbabel the Governor.

As is normal with the writing prophets, the book is named for the prophet himself.

Date of Writing

520 BC

Under the policies of Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, almost 50,000 Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem. Among these were Zerubbabel (Ezra 1:2-4 cf. Isaiah 44:28), Joshua the high priest and the Prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The authorization allowing the Jews to return to their land and rebuild their temple occurred in 538 BC

Levitical sacrifices were soon reinstated on a rebuilt altar for burnt offerings (Ezra 3:1-6), and in the second year of the return the foundation of the temple was laid (Ezra 3:8-13; 5:16). However, Samaritan harassment and eventual Persian pressure brought a halt to the rebuilding of the temple. Then spiritual apathy set in; and for about 16 more years-until the rule of the Persian king, Darius Hystaspes (521-486 BC)-the construction of the temple was discontinued. In the second year of Darius (520 BC) God raised up Haggai the prophet to encourage the Jews in the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 5:1-2; Haggai 1:1).

As stated by Haggai in 1:1, his first message was given on the first day of Elul (August-September) in the second year of Darius. This was in 520 BC

Theme and Purpose

The Book of Haggai is the second shortest book in the Old Testament; only Obadiah is shorter. The

literary style of Haggai is simple and direct. The content of the book is a report of four messages by a seemingly insignificant prophet whose ministry was apparently of limited duration.

Though Haggai is the second shortest book in the Old Testament, we should not underestimate the power of Haggai's four messages in his role in encouraging the rebuilding of the temple. Few prophets have succeeded in placing so much spiritual common sense into such a brief writing. One outstanding feature of Haggai's message is his strong awareness that his messages had their origin in God. Some 25 times he affirmed the divine authority of his messages. He consistently introduced his messages with, "*This is what the LORD Almighty says,*" and concluded them with a similar focus ("declares the LORD Almighty").

Haggai wrote to encourage and exhort the returned remnant of Israelites to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. In the process of this he taught (1) God blesses His people when they put Him first, (2) that we should not grow weary in the service of the Lord, and that (3) God's promises for tomorrow become the foundation for our confidence for today.

Key People

Haggai, Darius, Zerubbabel, Joshua the High Priest

Christ as Seen in HAGGAI

Here Messiah is portrayed as the Restorer of the Temple's glory (2:7-9) and the One who overthrows the kingdoms of the world (2:22).

Outline

1. The First Message: A Call to Rebuild the Temple. (1:1-15)

- A. The Introduction. (1:1)
- B. The First Rebuke. (1:2-6)
- C. The Remedy. (1:7-8)
- D. The Second Rebuke. (1:9-11)
- E. The Response to the Prophet's Message. (1:12-15)

2. The Second Message: A Call to Find Courage in God's Promises. (2:1-9)

- A. The Introduction. (2:1-2)

B. The Promises of Enablement and Future Glory. (2:3-9)

3. The Third Message: A Call to Cleanness of Life. (2:10-19)

A. The Introduction. (2:10)

B. The Problem: The Disobedience of the Remnant. (2:11-14)

C. The Solution: The Obedience of the Remnant. (2:15-19)

4. The Fourth Message: A Call to Confidence in the Future. (2:20-23)

A. The Introduction. (2:20-21a)

B. Promise of the Future Defeat of the Gentile Kingdoms. (2:21b-22)

C. Promise of the Restoration of the Davidic Kingdom. (2:23)

Zechariah

(The Jealousy of Yahweh)

Author and Name of the Book

Zechariah the prophet was the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the priest who led the Levites (Nehemiah 12:4). He was a contemporary of the previous prophet (Ezra 6:14).

Zechariah's name means "Yahweh remembers" or "Yahweh has remembered." This is a theme that runs through the whole book.

Date of Writing

520-518 BC

The first verse presents Zechariah as the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo, who was the same priest as the one mentioned in Nehemiah 12:4 as a contemporary of Zerubbabel. In Zechariah 2:4 the prophet is spoken of as a youth. He would probably have been a young man at the time he cooperated with Haggai in the rebuilding campaign of 520 BC His last dated prophecy (7:1-14) was given two years later, in 518 BC. Chapters 9-14 show every appearance of having been composed some decades after that, possibly after 480 BC in view of the reference to Greece (9:13).

We have no further information concerning Zechariah's personal career, except the reference

in Matthew 23:35, which seems to indicate that he was martyred by mob action in the temple grounds (since the Zechariah that Christ mentions is said to be the son of Berechiah rather than of Jehoiada, who however met his end in a like manner back in the days of King Joash, according to 2 Chronicles 24:20-21).⁵

Theme and Purpose

Zechariah was written to encourage the returned remnant of Jews to complete their work in rebuilding the temple. The prophet also showed that God was at work in the world restoring Israel to their spiritual inheritance in preparation for the coming Messiah. Doctrinally, Zechariah demonstrates the prominence of the temple in God's spiritual restoration of Israel; shows the providence of God in bringing back His people to their land, and highlights the superiority of the Messiah in the future spiritual restoration of the Nation.

Key People

Zechariah, Joshua the High Priest

Christ as Seen in ZECHARIAH

Perhaps no Old Testament book is more Messianic than Zechariah. This book presents Messiah or Christ in both of his advents and as both Servant and King, as Man and God, as the Angel of the Lord (3:1), the Righteous Branch (3:8), the Stone with the seven eyes (3:9), the Crucified Savior or the pierced One (12:10), the coming and humble King (9:9-10), the Shepherd who will be abandoned (13:7), and the coming Judge and righteous King (14).

Outline

1. The Call To Repentance. (1:1-6)

2. The Eight Visions Of Zechariah. (1:7-6:8)

A. Horses And Riders. (1:7-17)

B. Four Horns And Four Craftsmen. (1:18-21)

C. The Surveyor. (2:1-13)

D. The Golden Lampstand. (4:1-14)

E. The Flying Scroll. (5:1-4)

F. The Woman In The Ephah. (5:5-11)

⁵ Gleason Archer, Electronic Media

G. The Four Chariots. (6:1-8)

3. The Crowning Of Joshua. (6:9-15)

4. The Questions Concerning The Fasts. (7:1-8:23)

5. Two Oracles Concerning The Future. (9:1-14:21)

A. The Rejection Of Messiah. (9:1-11:17)

B. The Reign Of Messiah. (12:1-14:21)

Malachi

(Repent and Return)

Author and Name of the Book

Malachi is only mentioned in Malachi 1:1 as the author of this prophecy. His name means "My Messenger." This is fitting for the book anticipates the coming of the "messenger of the covenant" (cf. 3:1), a prophecy of John the Baptist (Matthew 11:10).

Date of Writing

450-400 BC

Concerning the date of Malachi, Gleason Archer writes

Judging from internal evidence, it seems clear that his prophecies were given in the second half of the fifth century, probably around 435 BC We come to this conclusion from the following indications:

(1) The temple had already been rebuilt and Mosaic sacrifice reinstated (1:7,10; 3:1). (2) A Persian governor was in authority at that time; hence it could not have been during either of Nehemiah's governorships (in 445 and 433 BC). (3) The sins which Malachi denounces are the same as those Nehemiah had to correct during his second term, namely, (a) priestly laxity (1:6; Nehemiah 13:4-9), (b) neglect of tithes, to the impoverishment of the Levites (3:7-12 cf. Nehemiah 13:10-13), (c) much intermarriage with foreign women (2:10-16 cf. Nehemiah 13:23-28). It is reasonable to assume that Malachi had already protested against these abuses in the years just preceding Nehemiah's

return; hence a fair estimate would be about 435 BC⁶

Theme and Purpose

Under the leadership of Nehemiah, there had been a period of revival (Nehemiah 10:28-39), but the priests and the people had grown cold in their walk with God and had become external and mechanical in their observance of the law. Though they were guilty of the sins Malachi denounced (priestly laziness, neglect of the tithes, and intermarriage with foreign women), the people acted confused over why God was dissatisfied with them. Malachi wrote to answer the questions of the priests and people, to reveal and rebuke them for their sins, their backsliding, and poor attitudes. He also ended with a word of encouragement about the coming of the Lord's messenger who would clear the way for Messiah.

Thus, Malachi rebuked the people for their neglect of the true worship of the Lord and called them to repentance (1:6; 3:7). Gleason Archer summarizes the theme as follows

"The theme of Malachi is that sincerity toward God and a holy manner of life are absolutely essential in the Lord's eyes, if His favor is to be bestowed upon the crops and the nation's economic welfare. Israel must live up to her high calling as a holy nation and wait for the coming of the Messiah, who by a ministry of healing as well as judgment will lead the nation to a realization of all her fondest hopes."⁷

Key People

Malachi

Christ as Seen in MALACHI

Regarding the Messianic focus of Malachi, Wilkinson and Boa have an excellent summary

The Book of Malachi is the prelude to four hundred years of prophetic silence, broken finally by the words of the next prophet, John the Baptist: "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

(John 1:29). Malachi predicts the coming of the messenger who will clear the way before the Lord (3:1 cf. Isaiah 40:30). John the Baptist later fulfills this prophecy, but in the next few verses (3:2-5) he jumps ahead to Christ in His second advent.⁸

⁸ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 296.
