

Introduction

Bible scholars divide this portion of Scripture into two categories—the Major Prophets, which include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; and the Minor Prophets, which include the twelve prophetic books from Hosea to Malachi. This delineation refers only to the length of the books, not the stature of the prophets or the content of the writing.

To study these books correctly, it's important to understand the historical, political, and spiritual conditions at the time they were written, as well as who the original audience was. The primary function of these books was to call Israel to obedience based on the covenants God made with them to be a holy nation and a people set apart to worship the one, true God. The prophetic messages in these books were delivered within the context of Israel's rebellion against God.

This week's lesson—a brief overview of each of the twelve books of the Minor Prophets—will help us understand better how these books fit into the redemptive history in Scripture. Each book will be covered in the order they appear in English Bibles, though they may have been in a different chronological sequence in history.

As you study these texts, remember to ask two important questions...

What do they teach about God's character? What do they teach about God's way of salvation?

This year we are memorizing Isaiah 40. This week's verse is Isaiah 40:25...
"To whom then will you liken Me that I would be his equal?" says the Holy One."

Day One

1. From Deuteronomy 18:18–22 and 2 Peter 1:19–21, define the role of a prophet. What were the requirements for a prophet and who empowered them?

Hosea. *Theme:* God's covenant love toward Israel; *Key Verse:* Hosea 6:6, "For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."

2. From 2 Kings 15:8–31, describe the condition of the northern kingdom at the time Hosea prophesied.
3. Read Hosea 1 – 3 and describe the relationship between Gomer and Hosea. What was their marriage supposed to represent to Israel?
4. According to Hosea 4, of what does the Lord say Israel is guilty?
5. From Hosea 9, how will the Lord punish Israel? To which covenant do the punishments relate?
6. According to Hosea 14, what hope is given to Israel? How are the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants reflected in this hope?

Day Two

Joel. *Theme:* The key phrase and theme of Joel is "the day of the Lord."; *Key Verse:* Joel 2:27, "Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and there is no other; and My people will never be put to shame."

1. Read Joel 1–2. According to Joel 2:12–13, what opportunity did the people have, even in the midst of these prophecies of judgment?
 - a. According to 2:13, what should be the motivation and comfort for the people?

2. From Joel 3:1–2 and 9–17, summarize what will happen at the time of judgment. How does that relate to God’s earlier covenant promises to Israel?
3. What do you learn about God’s character from the prophecies of judgment in the book of Joel?

Amos. *Theme:* God’s covenant with Israel will result in future restoration of a faithful remnant, despite the people’s lack of true worship and justice; *Key Passage:* Amos 9:13–15, the restoration of Israel

4. From Amos 1–2, identify when the words “for three transgressions...” are used, and the particular reason.
5. From Amos 4:6–13, identify God’s actions that warned the people to repent, and the repeated phrase that indicates they did not listen.
6. In Amos 5:4, 6, and 14–15, what command is repeated, and what blessings result?
7. From Amos 9:11–15, identify God’s promise to Israel that is a fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant.

Day Three

Obadiah. *Theme:* Prophecy against Edom for cursing Israel; comfort for Judah’s restoration; *Key Verse:* Obadiah 3, “The arrogance of your heart has deceived you.”

1. From Obadiah 1–14, of what sins did God accuse Edom in Obadiah’s vision?
2. In Obadiah 15–21, what attributes of God do you see as the prophet addresses Israel’s future, both the near judgment of Edom and a future judgment on all nations?

Jonah. *Theme:* God’s sovereign rule over all creation and His mercy toward the Ninevites; *Key Verse:* Jonah 2:9, “Salvation is from the LORD.”

3. From Jonah 1:1–3, what was God’s command to Jonah and what was Jonah’s response?
4. According to Jonah 1:2 and 3:2 and 8, what message did God give Jonah to preach? From Jonah 3 and Matthew 12:41, what was the people’s response?
5. In Jonah 4, how did Jonah respond to God’s mercy on Nineveh, and how did God respond to that attitude?
 - a. What lesson from this chapter can you apply to your life today?

Micah. *Theme:* God’s judgment for sin and His commitment to His covenant promises; *Key Verses:* Micah 5:2, the birth of the King in Bethlehem; Micah 6:8 “...what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

6. In Micah 1:2, 3:1, and 6:1–2, the prophet begins each of three sermons with “hear” or “listen.” From these texts, briefly describe what message the LORD wanted Micah to deliver to the people of Israel.
7. From Micah 4:2, what future fulfillment of God’s covenant is prophesied?
8. From Micah 5:2–4, identify at least two points that refer to the future coming of the Messiah, and a New Testament reference that supports Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of this prophesy.

Day Four

Nahum. *Theme:* Nineveh’s judgment and destruction; *Key Verse:* Nahum 1:3, “The LORD is slow to anger and great in power and the LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.”

1. From Nahum’s prophecy of judgment in chapter 1, what characteristics of God are revealed?
2. Nahum predicts the destruction of Nineveh decades before it happened. How does that deepen your understanding of Psalm 119:89, Matthew 5:18, and Hebrews 4:12?

Habakkuk. *Theme:* The just will live by faith; *Key Verse:* Habakkuk 2:4, “...but the righteous will live by his faith.”

3. From Habakkuk 1:2–4, what was the prophet’s first complaint and how did God respond in 1:5–11?
4. From Habakkuk 1:12–2:1, what was the prophet’s second complaint and how did God respond in 2:2–20?
5. From 1:12 and 2:1, in what did Habakkuk take comfort when he was perplexed about God’s ways? How can that be an example for you?

Zephaniah. *Theme:* Coming judgment on Judah and its enemies; *Key Verse:* Zephaniah 1:14–18, the day of the Lord

6. In Zephaniah 1, the prophecy’s fulfillment can be seen in both near and distant ways. From this chapter, what are some of the reasons for God’s judgment on the people?
7. In Zephaniah 3:8–20, what prophecies are given about the future restoration for God’s people?
 - a. How does this text encourage or comfort you as you consider what is to come?

Day Five

Haggai. *Theme:* Rebuilding God’s Temple; *Key Verse:* Haggai 2:20–23, prophecies about the Messiah

1. In Haggai 1, what was God’s message to the people, and what was their response?
2. In 2:4–5, how did God encourage Israel, and on what was that encouragement based?
3. Where else in the book of Haggai do you see God’s commitment to His covenant promises?

Zechariah. *Theme:* Prophecies to the people to return to the Lord as they remember His covenant promises; *Key Verses:* Zechariah 12:10 and 14:9–11, God’s mercy and grace to Israel

4. In Zechariah 1:1–6, what phrase is used repeatedly to describe God, and what is its significance?
5. From these verses, what did the LORD command the people to do, and what warning and promise did He give?
6. From chapter 2, how does God’s prophecy about Jerusalem connect with His covenant promises?

Malachi. *Theme:* God’s final call for repentance of post-exilic Judah; *Key Verses:* Malachi 3:17–18, God’s care for His own

7. In Malachi 1:6–2:9, how were Israel’s priests, the nation’s spiritual leaders, despising God? Cite verses.
 - a. How do you think professing Christians might despise God today?
8. In Malachi 3, to whom do you think the prophet was referring when he spoke of a messenger? Cite Scripture to support your answer.
9. What do you think is necessary to be included in the group described in Malachi 3:16–18? Does that description apply to you?
10. As you consider this overview of the Minor Prophets, how did your understanding of God’s character and His redemptive plan change?