

Minor Prophets – Major Messages

This past week I was reading the Old Testament. I started reading Hosea and as it is a short book, I kept reading. By the time I was done, I had finished Zechariah. I finished Malachi again Friday. In reading these short Books, the term “Minor Prophets” came to mind. In reading this week’s CGG Essay, Haggai was mentioned which was a hint towards this week’s topic.

When we call them “Minor” prophets this in no way limits or lessens their importance within God’s Word. We always check our sources for a true definition to gain in what context the term is used. Merriam-Webster has the most succinct as: inferior in importance, size, or degree : comparatively unimportant. We see that inferior is listed first as most people would grasp this meaning as being applicable. We hardly can call any of God’s Word inferior in importance, however the second term listed is “size,” which fits the description of these 12 Books. We should note there are 12 Minor Prophets in the Old Testament.

The Hebrew Bible lumps all twelve into one Book, Shneim Asar (the twelve). All Books of the Minor Prophets are relatively short in length but are in no way any less of an impact from God's message. Merriam-Webster nails the definition of "Prophet" in their first description: one who utters divinely inspired revelations: such as **a- often Prophet** : the writer of one of the prophetic books of the **Bible** or **b- Prophet** : one regarded by a group of followers as the final authoritative revealer of God's will.

2 Peter 1:20-21- "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture originated as anyone's own *private* interpretation; Because prophecy was not brought at any time by human will, but the holy men of God spoke as they were moved by *the* Holy Spirit."

Simply, a Prophet is a "spokesperson" for God. They were selected and chosen by God and sent to deliver a message, foretelling of future events or deliver a warning regarding misconduct, judgments to follow if the recipients did not repent. The true prophets only spoke what God told them. The span of them stretched for about four hundred years from 800-400. During this time, the Nation of Israel experienced several historical events which included the Assyrian invasion, the Northern

Kingdom was destroyed, and the Babylonian exile. All were results from disobedience to God. Okay, enough definitions and history for now, so who were the Minor Prophets? First we will list them and then give an overview of each one.

They are:

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

Hosea

Hosea 1:1- “The Word of the LORD that came to Hosea, the son of Beerī, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.”

(Like the other Minor Prophets, we will include the first verse of their Book to show they were called by God.)

Hosea’ name means “salvation.” His message was mainly to the Northern Kingdom. He was to deliver a warning to Israel to repent or face devastation and captivity. Their failure *led* to the invasion by the Assyrians who took the Northern Kingdom into slavery. There truly must be something wrong with humankind. How many times throughout history do we see the judgement of God for disobedience? We see the same behavior today with all of the idolatry and syncretism. A plain example of this is the 33,000 different denominations of so-called Christianity.

The New Testament scripture found in Romans 8 was present even then.

Romans 8:6-8- “For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace, Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can it *be*. But those who are in *the* flesh cannot please God.”

Key points from Hosea is that God told him to marry a prostitute as a demonstration of His love and mercy for His people. Repentance, obedience, forgiveness results in prosperity.

Hosea 1:2-3- “The beginning of the Word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms, for the land has utterly committed great whoredoms, departing from the LORD.” So, he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, who conceived and bore him a son.”

Hosea 2:19- “And I will betroth you to Me forever. Yea, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.”

One of the warnings in Hosea we frequently recite is Hosea 4:6.

Hosea 4:6- “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being as a priest to Me. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children.”

God places a value on mercy and knowledge of Him.

Hosea 6:6- “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, **and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.**”

Hosea 10:12- “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for **it is time to seek the LORD**, until He comes and rains righteousness on you.”

The message is clear to repent, to return to righteousness, and be obedient to God’s way of life.

Hosea 14:1- “O Israel, return to the LORD your God, for you have fallen because of your iniquity.”

Hosea 14:9- “Who *is* wise? He shall understand these things. *Who has* understanding? He shall know them, for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall in them.”

Joel

Joel 1:1-2- “The Word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel. Hear this, you old men, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land. Has this been in your days or even in the days of your fathers?”

Joel’s name means, “Yahweh or Jehovah is God.” He delivers another warning to the Nation of Israel of the coming Day of the Lord. We have discussed this on several occasions and how so many Protestant Churches *choose* to worship on the Lord’s Day. Their surprise is forthcoming.

Joel writes of a coming plague of locusts on their crops and vegetation. He speaks of a day of gloom and darkness.

Joel 2:2- “A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness. As the morning *is* spread across the mountains, so *comes* a great people

and a mighty people; there has never been the like, nor shall there ever be again, even to the years of many generations.”

Joel 2:11- “And the LORD shall utter His voice before His army; for His camp *is* exceedingly great; for powerful *is He* who executes His Word, for the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; and who can endure it?”

There are countless other scriptures throughout the Bible depicting the Day of the Lord as one of terror and destruction. Joel is a foretelling of a coming day of God’s wrath and Christ’s return.

Joel 2:28-32- “And afterward it shall be *that* I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams; your young men shall see visions. And also, I will pour out My Spirit upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days. 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 be *that* whoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be saved; for salvation shall be in Mount Zion and

in Jerusalem, as the LORD has said, and among the remnant whom the LORD shall call.”

These scriptures are repeated in the New Testament in Acts 2:16-21. God calls for His people to *repent* by humbling themselves, fasting, and praying. His warning is a call to repentance before the judgement comes.

Amos

Amos 1:1- “The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa; the word which he saw concerning Israel in the days of king Uzziah of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.”

The name Amos means “carried by God.” His writing centers draws attention to the sins of Israel’s enemies and then focuses on the sins of disobedience and social injustice. Amos primarily prophesied to the Northern Kingdom (Israel) as they had grown to be contentedly wealthy and were developing a false sense of security much like the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:17. The greatest sins in both the Northern and Southern (Judah) Kingdoms was idolatry and corruption.

Amos 3:1-3- “Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, “You only know of all the families of the earth; therefore, I will punish you *for* all your iniquities. Can two walk together unless they agree?”

This attitude is prevalent throughout today’s society as wealth and greed are co-mingled and widely accepted as the norm. The love of money and material things can take the place of the love for God. The mindset is once security, wealth, and pleasures are achieved, the need for God and His provisions are diminished.

Amos 5:1- “Hear this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel.”

Amos brings warnings to Israel for their correction.

Amos 5:2-4- “The virgin of Israel has fallen; she shall rise no more; she lies forsaken on her land. There is none to raise her up, For thus says the Lord GOD, “The city that went out *by* a thousand shall leave a hundred, and that which went out *by* a hundred shall have ten left in the house of Israel,” For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel, “Seek Me, and you shall live.”

There again is also a warning on the Day of the Lord.

Amos 5:18- “**Woe** to those desiring the day of the LORD! What *is* this for you?

The day of the LORD *is* darkness and not light;”

This should be a wakeup call but there are too many still asleep worshipping God in their own way. God warned there would be a famine of His Word because of their sins. He was going to remove Himself from them.

Amos 8:11-12- “Behold, the days come,” says the Lord GOD, “that I will send *a famine* in the land; not a *famine* of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the LORD and shall not find *it*.”

Is there already a famine of God’s Word? Not entirely but **there is a famine of God’s truth in churches.** This is one of the major reasons it is so vital that we read and study the Word of God and have it written in our own hearts.

God’s instructions to these Minor Prophets are quite profound.

Amos 9:8-10- “Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD *are* on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; except that I will not completely destroy the house of Jacob,” says the LORD. “For lo, I will command, and I will shake the house of Israel among all the nations, as one shakes with a sieve, yet not a grain shall fall *to* the earth. All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword, who say, ‘The evil shall not draw near, or confront us.’”

Repentance and obedience always leads to blessings.

Amos 9:13-15- “Behold, the days come,” says the LORD, “that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed. And the mountains will drop sweet wine, and all the hills will flow with it. And I will bring back the exiles of My people Israel, and they shall build the cities which are desolate, and they shall live *in* them. And they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine. They shall also make gardens and eat their fruit. And I will plant them in their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them,” says the LORD your God.”

Obediah

Obadiah 1:1- “The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom—for we have heard a message from the LORD, and a messenger is sent among the nations *saying*, “Rise up, even let us rise up against her for battle.”

This is another short Book with only twenty-one verses. Obediah means “servant of God.” His message was to Judah that the attack on them by Edomites would be avenged by God. Judah’s faith was waning and the message was an assurance that God still cared for His people.

Obadiah 1:3-4- “The pride of your heart has deceived you—you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation *is* up high, who says in his heart, ‘Who shall bring me down *to* the ground?’ Though you rise high like the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, I will bring you down from there,” says the LORD.”

Obediah 1:15- “For the day of the LORD *is* near on all the nations; as you have done, it shall be done to you. Your reward shall return upon your own head,”

We all have the reassurance that God is watching over His own and He will dispense judgement.

Obediah 1:18- “And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame. And the house of Esau *shall be* for stubble. And they shall kindle in them and burn them up. And no survivor shall be of the house of Esau;” for the LORD has spoken it.”

Jonah

Jonah 1:1-2- “And the Word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.”

Jonah means “peace.” We are all more familiar with Jonah as he is a good representation of all of us. He was reluctant to listen to God. It is perfect in displaying we cannot run nor hide from God. Jonah thought he could flee to another city and fail to listen to God’s charge.

Jonah 1:3- “But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. And he went down to Joppa. And he found a ship going to Tarshish. And he paid its fare, and went down into it, in order to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.”

We know it didn't fare well for Jonah. God sent a tempest on the sea, and the crew were in a panic. It happened that they blamed Jonah for the storm because of his fleeing his God. They threw him overboard and he was promptly swallowed by a great fish.

Jonah 1:15-17- “And they lifted Jonah up and threw him out into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD, and vowed vows. And the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”

It is hard to fathom being inside the belly of a “great fish” much less for three days and three nights! Evidently Ninevah was a rival to Israel and Jonah was reluctant to bring them a message from God. He learned that salvation is God's to dispense as He sees fit regardless of our thoughts or how wicked people may be.

Jonah 2:9- “But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will fulfill that which I have vowed. Salvation belongs to the LORD!”

The lesson for all of us is that God can choose whomever He wants for salvation.

We can see a similar example in **John 21:21-22**- “Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, what shall happen to this one?” Jesus said to him, “If I desire that he remain alive until I come, what is it to you? You follow me.”

The point is people can get so caught up in looking at others they fail to focus on their own spiritual condition. Another example is in the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in Luke 13.

Luke 13:10-13- “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed with himself in this manner: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men— extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers—or even as this tax collector. I fast twice in the week, and I give a tithe of everything that I gain.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat himself on the chest, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner.’”

God had mercy on the Ninevites as He has had mercy on us. This Minor Prophet’s brief message and example spirals out into numerous other examples of how God’s Word intertwines with the lessons and principals God wants us to learn.

Micah

Micah 1:1-2- “The Word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Hear, all you people! Hearken, O earth, and *all* its fullness. And let the Lord GOD be witness against you, *even* the LORD from His holy temple,”

Micah means “who is like God?” No one is like God.

2 Samuel 7:22- “Therefore You are great, O LORD God. For there is none like You, neither is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.”

Jeremiah 10:6- “*Therefore there is* none like You, O LORD; You *are* great, and Your name *is* great in might.”

Psalms 35:10- “All my bones shall say, “O LORD, Who is like You, who delivers the poor from him stronger than he; yea, *even* the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?” (Psalm 86:8)

Micah's message was a judgement from God on the inequality and greed being displayed by the people. The poor were subjected to being mistreated by greedy landlords and corrupt officials.

Micah 2:1-2- "Woe to those who plot wickedness and prepare evil on their beds! When the morning is light they practice it because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet and seize fields, and houses, and take them away. And they oppress a man and his household, even a man and his inheritance."

That word "woe" always has a significant impact on what God has in store for those practicing evil. Woe appears in over one hundred scriptures. Evil conduct abounded and God's wrath would come upon them.

Micah 5:10-15- "And it shall be in that day," says the LORD, "I will cut off your horses out of your midst, and I will destroy your chariots. And I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds. And I will cut off witchcrafts out of your hand, and there shall not be fortunetellers among you. I will also cut off your graven images, and your sacred pillars out of the midst of you; and you shall never again worship the work of your hands. And I will pluck your groves out of the midst of you; thus, I will destroy your cities. And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have never heard."

Micah 6:11-13- “Shall I count pure those with wicked balances, and those with a bag of deceitful weights? *For* her rich men are full of violence, and her inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue *is* deceitful in their mouth. Therefore, I also have made *you* sick by striking you, making *you* desolate because of your sins.”

God will not tolerate disobedience and injustice forever. He will bring His wrath and judgment on those who refuse to repent. Again, with repentance and obedience comes blessings.

Micah 7:18-19- “Who *is* a God like You, Who pardons iniquity and passes over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not keep His anger forever because He delights *in* mercy. He will turn again; He will have compassion upon us. He will subdue our iniquities. Yea, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”

With our present moral decay, we can ask “how much longer before God brings this nation under His judgment?”

2 Peter 3:9- “The Lord is not delaying the promise *of His coming*, as some in their own minds reckon delay; rather, He is longsuffering toward us, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

Hebrews 10:36-37- “For you need to have endurance, so that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise. For *it is* but a short time *until* He Who is coming will come and will not delay.”

I encourage you all to read these Minor Prophets and as you do, see how many other scriptures come to mind in both the Old and New Testaments. Ingesting God’s Word will bring understanding and tremendous spiritual growth!

We are truly fortunate and blessed to have a God Who is patient and merciful. This is only a brief overview of the first six. We will continue a look at the remaining six Minor Prophets next week in Part 2. As short as their writings are, when God speaks He doesn’t need a lot of words, look what happened after He said just three words, “let there be light.” Amen.