



The Decline of the Kingdoms

The Minor Prophets



PHIL SMITH

The Decline of the Kingdoms

This is a story of the decline of the kingdoms, not just Israel and Judah but others. I will concentrate on how minor prophets fit into the other books and histories of the Bible. This is one of the reason why I did this study and I must say that the Minor Prophets has always been favourite of mine. To be sort of combined together yet stretching over hundreds of years was something always confusing to me. I will used the Minor Prophets as stepping stones to reveal the decline of the kingdoms at that time. As a brief introduction, I begin with Obadiah in 840 BC who tried to warn Edom about the way they acted toward Judah. Then Joel who in 835 BC appeals to the people to repent in order to avert the coming disaster. Is that not the same for today. The lost of the world today is ever more lost than they used to be. God is using his people to cry out to them to repent and turn from their evil ways. Then God called Jonah to preach to Nineveh, the capital the Assyrian Empire, an incredible evil people who had committed abominable atrocities in the name of their god. Hey, they actually repented. Then there was Amos, and then comes Hosea in 700 BC who preaches the love of God to the spiritual adultery that Israel continued to commit. Then came Micah, Nahum and Habakkuk, another favourite of mine. The last three includes Haggai in 520 BC, then Zechariah almost the same time as Haggai and finally Malachi listed as the last book of the Old Testament.

The book, 'The Minor Prophets' by Timothy Tow, © 2001 published by Far Eastern Bible College Press, Singapore is the book that started this essay. Of course there are many good studies on the Minor Prophets, Tow seems to put it more concisely to me. All the important points are brought together in a concise straight forward minor. I include a lot of material also from 'Talk Thru the Bible' by Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa which I have incorporated into the essay. I have also referred to material from Dr Douglas Stuart in his class, Old Testament Survey. Other Bibles I have referred to include a Systematic Theological Study Bible from Crossway, Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopaedia of the Bible which I refer to a lot. And of course I like to refer to the different archaeological Bibles that are available such as the Zondervan's NIV, Crossway's ESV and another by Zondervan is the Cultural Background Study Bible. If you don't have these books in you library, you should really get them.

So, these prophets were raised up by God to denounce sin and apostasy, and to preach repentance over a period of 400 years. The books are shorter than those of the Major Prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. Hosea, Amos, Joel and Jonah were

prophets of the Northern Kingdom while Isaiah, Jeremiah, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah were prophets of the Judah, the southern kingdom. Ezekiel and Daniel are considered prophets of the captivity and Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are considered prophets of the return. Look at a brief list of information on the books below:

Book & Year	Key Phrase	Theme
Obadiah 840 BC	Judgment of Edom	Edom (descended from Esau) for refusing to act as a brother toward Judah is condemned.
Joel 835 BC	Day of the Lord Southern Kingdom	A recent locust plague illustrates the far m more terrifying day of the Lord. God appeals to the people to repent in order to avert the coming disaster.
Jonah 770 BC	Revival in Nineveh	Nineveh repented as a result to Jonah's one-line prophetic message.
Amos 763 – 760 BC	Israel	Amos preached of coming doom to the Northern Kingdom.
Hosea 755-710 BC	God's Love for the Northern Kingdom	The story of Hosea and his faithless wife illustrates the loyal love of God and the spiritual adultery of Israel.
Micah 737-690 BC	Judgment and Restoration of Judah	In spite of divine retribution against the corruption of Israel and Judah, God's covenant with them will be fulfilled in Messiah's future kingdom.
Nahum 663 - 612 BC	Judgment of Nineveh	About 140 years after Jonah, Micah predicted the destruction of the city because of its idolatry and brutality.
Zephaniah 627 BC	Day of the Lord Southern Kingdom	The awesome judgment was to be followed by great blessing.
Habakkuk 609 BC	Live by Faith Southern Kingdom	Troubled with God's plan to use the Babylonians as His rod of judgment on Judah, Habakkuk praises the Lord after gaining a better perspective on His power and purpose.
Haggai 520 BC	Reconstruction of the Temple - Judah	Haggai urges the Jews to put God first and finish the Temple they had already started so that they can enjoy God's blessing.
Zechariah 520-518 BC	Prepare for the Messiah in Judah	Like Haggai, Zechariah encourages the Jews to complete the construction of the Temple. He relates it to the coming of Messiah in messianic prophecies.
Malachi 433 BC	Appeal to Backsliders In Judah	The people had grown cold, and Malachi rebukes them for their compromising ways.

The table below shows the prophets in relation to kings, their reigns and years.

The Kings of the Kingdom of		Begin Reign	Years from Solomon	Reign in Years	The Prophets of the Kingdom	
Judah	Israel				Judah	Israel
1. Rehoboam		931 BC	0	17		
	1. Jeroboam	931 BC	0	22		(Ahijah)
2. Abijah		913 BC	18	3		
3. Asa		911 BC	20	41		
	2. Nadab	910 BC	21	2		
	3. Baasha	909 BC	22	24		(Jehu)
	4. Elah	886 BC	45	2		
	5. Zimri	885 BC	46	7 days		
	6. Omri	885 BC	46	12		
	7. Ahab	874 BC	57	22		(Elijah)
4. Jehoshaphat		870 BC	61	25		(Micaiah)
	8. Ahaziah	853 BC	78	2		(Elisha)
	9. Joram	852 BC	79	12		
5. Jehoram		848 BC	83	8	Obadiah	
6. Ahaziah		841 BC	90	1		
	10. Jehu	841 BC	90	28		
7. Qn Athaliah		841 BC	90	6		
8. Joash		835 BC	96	40	Joel	
	11. Jehoahaz	814 BC	117	17		
	12. Jehoash	798 BC	133	16		
9. Amaziah		796 BC	135	29		Jonah
	13. Jeroboam II	782 BC	149	41		Amos, Hosea
10. Uzziah		767 BC	164	52	Isaiah	
	14. Zechariah	753 BC	178	6 months		
	15. Shallum	752 BC	179	1 month		
	16. Menahem	752 BC	179	10		
	17. Pekahiah	742 BC	189	2		
	18. Pekah	740 BC	191	20		
11. Jotham		740 BC	191	16	Micah	
12. Ahaz		732 BC	199	16		
	19. Hoshea	732 BC	199	9		
13. Hezekiah		716 BC	215	29		
14. Manasseh		687 BC	244	55		
15. Amon		642 BC	289	2		Nahum
16. Josiah		640 BC	291	41	Zephaniah & Jeremiah	
17. Jehaohaz		609 BC	322	3 months		
18. Jehoiackin		609 BC	322	11	Habakkuk	
19. Jehoiachin		597 BC	334	3 months		
20. Zedekiah		597 BC	334	11		
		592 BC	339		Ezekiel & Daniel	
		587 BC	411		Haggai & Zechariah	
(Esther)		478 BC	453			
(Ezra)		458 BC	473			
(Nehemiah)		445 BC	486			
		433 BC	498		Malachi	

Note that, all the kings of the Northern Kingdom were bad; however, in Judah eight of the Kings were Godly people. In some ways the ‘Minor Prophets’ is a depressing history of 400 years of rebellion by God’s people. Even more depressing and sad that after everything God had provided for them they forsook the God and became like fifth in God’s sight but even in spite of that, God kept crying out for them to repent. If it had not been for those few Kings in Judah who had brought about occasional spiritual reforms, one wonders what God would have done to them.

The first book we look at is Hosea. It is not the first book chronologically. Hosea actually is the fifth book with Obadiah, Joel, Jonah and Amos coming first. Hosea’s name has the meaning of “salvation,” and the three root consonants also included the names for Joshua and Jesus. He was the son of Beerī, married to Gomer and father of a son and two daughters. Hosea was called to minister in the northern kingdom of Israel which at the time was also referred to as Ephraim, the largest tribe of the north, was experiencing a time of financial prosperity but was deep in moral corruption.

Hosea is called to prophesize during Israel’s last days; it would be the same for Judah when Jeremiah prophesied years later to the people who had turned their back on God. God uses Hosea’s own personal home situation as an image of the tragedy that would beset Israel. Just as Gomer is married to Hosea, Israel is betrothed to God. In both cases the bride plays the harlot and runs after other lovers. It is a story of a one-sided love and faithfulness. Hosea loved his wife so much as can be seen in the way he forgave her for prostituting herself to others. The same was with God; He was broken hearted for His wayward people who had prostituted themselves to sin. Hosea’s love kept him buying Gomer his wife back from the slave market; for Israel it meant purifying punishment followed by restoration, but alas, the Northern Kingdom never repented and never returned to God. Hosea’s message over the years to the people was that God hated the sins of the people and judgment was coming, but His love was still there for anyone who wanted it.

The story of Hosea and Gomer’s personal life is tragic. It seems that Gomer was actually a beautiful woman who came from a respectful family. Their three children were named by God as signs to Israel: Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, and Lo-Ammi which means, “God Scatters,” “Not Pitied,” and “Not My People.” God used Hosea and Gomer’s marriage life and an illustration of how He considered the state of affairs was with Israel and would judge and scatter Israel because of her sin. Because of Hosea’s own painful experience, he was able to feel the sorrow God was experiencing over the sinfulness of His people. His own personal

love for Gomer was a reflection of God’s concern for Israel. Israel had fallen into the filthiness that sin causes and had hardened their hearts against God. We live in an age today approaching that of Israel where people flagrantly violate God’s commandments where they will be indicted for their crimes against God and God’s people. But, even now, like then, God wants to heal and redeem the lost.

Consider this outline:

I	Faithful Husband/Adulterous Wife	
A	Introduction	1:1
B	Prophetic Marriage	
	1 Hosea’s Marriage to Gomer	1:2
	2 Their Children	1:3–9
	3 Future Restoration	1:10–2:1
C	The Adultery of Gomer	
	1 Israel’s Spiritual Adultery	2:2–5
	2 God’s Judgment	2:6–13
	3 Restoration of Israel	2:14–23
D	The Restoration of Gomer	3:1–5
II	Faithful Lord/Adulterous People	
A	Spiritual Adultery	
	1 Israel’s Sins	
	a Rejection of God	4:1–11
	b Idolatry	4:12–19
	2 Judgment	5:1–14
	3 Future Restoration	5:15–6:3
B	The Refusal to Repent	
	1 Transgression	6:4–11
	2 Refusal to Return to the Lord	7:1–16
	3 Idolatry	8:1–14
C	Judgment on Israel	
	1 Dispersion	9:1–9
	2 Barrenness	9:10–17
	3 Destruction	10:1–15
D	The Restoration of Israel	

1	God's Love for Israel	11:1–12
2	Israel's Continuing Sin	12:1–13:16
3	God's to Restore Israel	14:1–9

Look at the divisions of the text of Hosea: This is taken from Tow.

	Adulterous Wife & Faithful Husband			Adulterous Israel and Faithful God			
Divisions:	Prophetic Marriage 1:1 – 1:2	Gomer & Israel 2:2 – 2:23	Gomer's Restoration 3:1 – 3:5	Spiritual Adultery of Israel 4:1 – 6:3	Israel's Refusal to Repent 6:4 to 8:14	God's Judgement on Israel 9:1 – 10:15	Israel's Restoration to God 11:1 – 14:9
Topics:	Marriage of Hosea Personal			Message of Hosea National			
Place:	Northern Kingdom						
Time:	755 – 710 BC						

Judgment would fall on Israel for such idolatrous extremes which the people had slumped to. From the very beginning in setting up two golden calves to be worshipped at Bethel in the South and Dan in the North, the Northern Kingdom placed itself on a downhill slide to ruin. One hundred and fifty years later, Hosea was called by God during the time of Jeroboam II to warn the nation of the impending doom where immorality was ripe. As already mentioned, he had married Gomer who bore Hosea three children which God named accordingly: Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, and Lo-Ammi which means, 'God Scatters,' 'Not Pitied,' and 'Not My People.' The name Jezreel was where wicked King Ahab built his palace. His 70 sons were all executed by Jehu. So like Hosea's wife going after her lovers, Israel left God for material gains. They forgot the words of Moses to remember the Lord their God. They turned to Baal from God. One of the saddest things was they were so wicked that God couldn't call them His children any longer. God had to turn away from them and they would no longer experience His blessings. Chapter three shows us Gomer leaving her husband to live with another man. She actually became a concubine-slave since she has no money. A slave was worth 15 shekels and a homer and a half of barley and Hosea purchases her from the slave block because he was still in love with her. She'd been brought home separated even from her husband. Thus, like Gomer, the Northern Kingdom has gone down the same path no longer acknowledging the truth of God living in adultery, killing, stealing, swearing, lying, murdering, whoredom, drunkenness and idolatry. They had rejected everything that the Lord stood for. God had had enough; He would change their so called glory into shame. The Lord said, they will eat but never have enough, whore with others but not producing.

Hosea tells the royal court, the priests and princes of the nation that their sins and arrogance have separated them from God and that they would be punished for this and be carried away. Never the less, God still takes time to plead with them to repent. He directed Hosea to tell them this and that his desire was obedience and love from them. As part of there road to ruin, Gilead had turned into a shelter for murderers. It used to be a city of refuge and a person could find protection but no more. But this is only the tip of the list of horrible sins they had committed. Their polluting idolatry is even worse and had long spread throughout the Kingdom. Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom and it was like today's Bangkok, the sex capital of Thailand. The writer says their lustfulness could be compared to a baker's oven which must be constantly fuelled. All of these lustful practices come from the results of their worship to Baal. The prophet tells, even pleads with them to sow themselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, and break up their fallow ground: for it was now time to seek the Lord, so he could come and rain righteousness upon them, but instead they continued to plough wickedness, reap iniquity and eat fruit of lies because they had long stop trusting in the way.

In chapter eight, God tells the prophet to blow the trumpet to announce the approach of disaster. It was Isaiah who prophesied in Isaiah 10:5-6, 'O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against a hypocritical nation and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.' They will eat the fruit of their own way, God says. After the death of Jeroboam II king after king was assassinated while they worshipped the false god in Samaria. Chapter nine and the last two chapter form a connected whole. Gilgal had become another centre of wickedness; God hated their acts of wickedness there and then finally declared, He would love them no more. In chapter ten, even though their grape vines yielded grapes, they were empty and sour. Even though they were warned of their sins, they openly proclaimed that they would do whatever they wanted. Up to this point the prophet's message was one of condemnation. In chapter twelve, apostate Israel is now commanded to think back to her ancestry, to Jacob and his life committed to God. Again, she is reminded of Moses who God sent to save them from Egypt. In judgment of their ingratitude, God would now be like a lion, leopard, bear and a wild beast tearing them apart and devouring them (Wilkinson & Boa, 1983). But again, yet God pleads with them in this last chapter to turn from their wicked ways. He wants to heal their backsliding and love them freely. He wants to turn away His anger from their sin and wickedness; alas they continued in

their wicked way and paid no attention to Hosea. Then it happened, in 722 BC that Samaria fell and was carried off by the ruthless Assyrians never to be heard of again, forever vanished from the site of God.

Joel identifies himself as the son of Pethuel meaning “persuaded of God.” His frequent references to Zion and the house of the Lord, suggest that he probably lived near Jerusalem. This was sat in a time some 96 years after the two kingdoms split. Joel was in the southern kingdom where Josiah had become king, somewhere around 835 BC. Because of his statements about the priesthood, some think Joel was a priest as well as a prophet. In any case, Joel was a clear, concise, and uncompromising preacher of repentance. The theme of Joel is the ‘Day of the Lord’. A terrible locust plague had recently occurred in Judah and Joel used this to illustrate the coming Day of Judgment when God directly intervenes in human history to vindicate His righteousness. This will be a time of unparalleled retribution upon Israel and the nation, but it will also result in great blessing and salvation for all who trust in the Lord “And it shall come to pass *that* whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved” (2:32a).

Joel was written as a warning to the people of Judah of their need to humbly turn to the Lord with repentant hearts so that God could bless rather than buffet them. If they continued to spurn God’s call for repentance, judgment would follow. Joel stresses the sovereign power of God over nature and the nations, and shares how God uses nature to get the attention of people.

Fortunately, Joel lived during the time of Josiah who was loyal to God. He ascended the throne at the early age of eight years and around 16 years of age, he devoted himself to God. He got rid of idolatry in the land. In the eighteenth year of his reign he repaired the temple. While this work was being carried on, Hilkiah, the high priest, discovered a scroll, which seemed to have been an original copy of the law, the entire Pentateuch, written by Moses. When read to him, the king sought Huldah, the ‘prophetess,’ to see what she could make of it. Josiah gathered the people together, and had them to recommit themselves to the covenant of God. The Passover was then celebrated, as in the days of his great predecessor, Hezekiah. Soon after this, Pharaoh-Necho II, king of Egypt, in an expedition against the king of Assyria, with the view of gaining possession of Carchemish, sought a passage through Judah. Josiah refused him and tried to oppose the progress of Necho. The army of Judah went out and encountered Egypt at Megiddo, on the plain of Esdraelon. Josiah was fatally

wounded by a random arrow and soon afterwards, died.. Jeremiah composed a funeral elegy on this like the other kings of Israel.

A theme of disaster runs throughout the book with locust plagues, famine, raging fires, invading armies, and celestial phenomena, but promises of hope are intertwined with the pronouncements of coming judgment. Joel begins with an account of a recent locust plague. A black cloud of insects stripped the grapevines, fruit trees and destroyed the grain harvest. At the same time a drought had come putting the people in a desperate situation. Joel uses this natural catastrophe to illustrate a far greater judgment to come. Compared to the terrible day of the Lord, the destruction by the locusts will seem insignificant. The land will be invaded by a swarming army; like locusts they will be speedy and voracious. The destruction will be dreadful, but Joel told them that it wasn't too late for the people to turn back to the Lord and repent. A prophetic warning was designed to bring them to the point of repentance. 'Now, therefore,' says the LORD, 'Turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning' (2:12). Eventually the swarming, creeping, stripping, and gnawing locusts would come again in a fiercer form. But God promised that judgment would be followed by great blessing in a material and spiritual sense. Consider this outline:

I	Looking back	
A	To the Locust	1:1–12
B	To the Drought	1:13–20
II	Looking forward	
A	The Coming Day of the Lord	
1	Coming Invasion of Judah	2:1–11
2	Promise for Salvation	2:12–27
B	The Great Day of the Lord	
1	Last Events	2:28–32
2	The Final Events	
a	Judgment on the Gentiles	3:1–16
b	Restoration of Judah	3:17–21

Look at the divisions of the text of Joel:

	Day of the Lord in Retrospect 1:1 – 1:20		Day of the Lord in Prospect 2:1 – 3:21	
Divisions:	Past Day of the Locust 1:1 – 1:12	Past Day of the Drought 1:13 – 1:20	Imminent Day of the Lord 2:1 – 2:27	Ultimate Day of the Lord 2:28 – 3:21
Topics:	Historical Invasion		Prophetic Invasion	
	Past Judgement on Judah		Future Judgement & Restoration of Judah	
Place:	Southern Kingdom of Judah			
Time:	835 BC			

The main theme in Joel, ‘the Day of the Lord,’ is emphasised five times, one time in chapter one, three times in chapter 2 and another time in chapter 3. Joel’s message was also called the Prophecy of Pentecost in Acts 2:16-21. But know that this saying ‘the Day of the Lord’ is used in other references concerning the coming of the Lord. In Chapter one, it told all the elders to take note of what he was telling them. He tells them of the locust and its four stages of life. The plague was so severe that food was in short supply. This caused a great depression throughout the land. Joel said that the only way out of total destruction was repentance. The Day of the Lord brings clouds of thick darkness. This invasion of the end time forces would be so great that the earth quakes; the sun and moon are darkened and the stars will be blotted out. But God promised to deliver the nation from this army and restore what the locusts have taken and Israel. In verses 28-32, Joel prophesized that on the Day of Pentecost, He would cause his servants and handmaidens to prophesy, preach the Gospel to the heathens and bring revival to the slumbering Church. These are the days that will lead to the climax of that great and terrible Day of the Lord when the powers of heaven will be shaken. Chapter three describes the battle of all battles, ‘the Battle of Armageddon’. In the Valley of Judgment, punishment of God’s enemies will be the climax of the Tribulation where then God pours out his wrath upon the world. It will be the end of the earth and then Jerusalem would be holy with abundant food and water. Egypt will be desolation and Edom will be a wilderness because of the violence they have brought against Judah. This climaxing paragraph will lead to the golden millennium of Christ’s rule on earth with Jerusalem as the earth’s capital.

Now we look at Amos whose name meant, ‘to lift a burden, to carry’ or ‘burden-bearer.’ He was a farmer-turned-prophet who lashed out at sin and tried to turn the nation to repentance. Amos grew up in Judah, a shepherd of Tekoa, a village just south of Bethlehem. Can you imagine the lives of these prophets, especially Amos, a farmer living in such a rebellious difficult time. He saw his own people turn against the Lord and continue on a path

of wickedness and evil. Is that any different than what is happening today? God called him to preach to all the nations in the area, including Israel and Judah. Look at the following outline of Amos:

I	Introduction	1:1–2
II	Eight Judgments	
A	on Damascus	1:3–5
B	on Gaza	1:6–8
C	on Tyre	1:9–10
D	on Edom	1:11–12
E	on Ammon	1:13–15
F	on Moab	2:1–3
G	on Judah	2:4–5
H	on Israel	2:6–16
III	Three Sermons of Judgment	
A	First Sermon: Israel’s Present	
1	Israel’s Judgment Is Deserved	3:1–10
2	Israel’s Judgment Is Described	3:11–15
B	Second Sermon: Israel’s Past	
1	Israel’s Judgment Is Deserved	4:1–5
2	Israel’s Judgment Is Demonstrated	4:6–11
3	Israel’s Judgment Is Described	4:12–13
C	Third Sermon: Israel’s Future	
1	Israel’s Judgment Is Deserved	5:1–15
2	Israel’s Judgment Is Described	5:16–6:14
a	First Woe	5:16–27
b	Second Woe	6:1–14
IV	Five Visions of Judgment	
A	Locusts	7:1–3
B	Fire	7:4–6
C	Plumb Line	7:7–9
D	Opposition of Amaziah	7:10–17
E	Summer Fruit	8:1–14
F	Stricken Doorposts	9:1–10

V Five Promises of Restoration of Israel

9:11–15

Amos prophesied ‘in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel’. He prophesied in Beth-el about 755 BC after the time of Obadiah, Joel, and Jonah and just before Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah. He would have known or known about Hosea because their times were very close. As mentioned, Uzziah reigned over a rich and militarily successful Judah, who fortified Jerusalem and subdued the Philistines, the Ammonites, and the Edomites. In the north, Israel was ruled by the capable king Jeroboam II was experiencing a time of financial prosperity like Judah but was deep in moral corruption. Prosperity only increased the materialism, immorality, and injustice of the people. During these years, Assyria, Babylonia, Syria, and Egypt were relatively weak. Thus, the people of Israel found it hard to imagine the coming disaster predicted by Amos. However, it was only three decades until the downfall of Israel. Again, I’m not specifically quoting Tow here but a lot of these ideas are coming from Tow. I really recommend you getting the book and reading it.

Look at the Divisions of Amos:

	Eight Prophecies 1:1 – 2:16	Three Sermons 3:1 – 6:14	Five Vision 7:1 – 9:10	Five Promises 9:11 – 9:15
Divisions:	Judgement of Israel and Surrounding Nations 1:1 – 2:16	Sin of Israel: Present, Past and Future 3:1 – 6:14	Pictures of the Judgement of Israel 7:1 – 9:10	Restoration of Israel 9:11 – 9:15
Judgements:	Announcing	Reasons	Future	Promises
	Judgements			Hope
Place:	The Surrounding Nations	The Northern Kingdom of Israel		
Time:	763 – 760 BC			

Look at the two prophets in this comparison of what God had called them to.

Amos	Hosea
Preaches against injustice	Preaches against idolatry
Instructs people to seek God	Instructs people to know God
Rebukes social inequities	Rebukes religious inequities
Aims at their walk with God	Aims at their worship of God
Stresses their need for justice	Stresses their need for God
‘I hate your offerings’	‘I don’t delight in your sacrifices’
Nothing on image worship	Majors on image worship
Israel as a privileged people	Israel as a privileged people
Little about the love of God	Much about the loyal love of God
Aroused the conscience	Called for repentance
Israel is a state	Israel is a family

Deals with foreigners	Deals with his homeland
Universal message	A national message
Refers little to the past	Refers a lot to the past
Righteousness of God	Grace of God
God's Wrath	God's Loving kindness
Simple character	Complex character
A philosopher	A poet
A moralist	A mystic
Stern	Sympathetic

Amos' message of the coming doom of the northern kingdom was unbelievable to those living there. Times were booming: business, bulging boundaries, and optimism. However, the internal conditions have never looked worse: injustice, greed, hypocrisy, oppression, immorality and arrogance. His message was: 'Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!' Amos is called by God to preach a harsh message of judgment to Israel. Amos begins with the nations that surround Israel as his catalogue of catastrophes gradually spirals in on Israel herself. Seven times God declares, 'I will send a fire' a symbol of judgment. In Chapter three to six: Amos delivers three sermons, each beginning with the phrase 'Hear this word'. The first sermon is a general pronouncement of judgment because of Israel's iniquities. The second sermon revealed the crimes of the people and describes the ways God has chastened them in order to draw them back to Him. Five times He says, 'Yet you have not returned to me.' The third sermon lists the sins of Israel and calls the people to repent. However, they hate integrity, justice, and compassion, and their refusal to turn to Yahweh will lead to their exile. Although they arrogantly wallow in luxury, their time of prosperity will suddenly come to an end. Three sermons are followed by five visions of coming judgment upon the northern kingdom. The first two judgments of locusts and fire do not come to pass because of Amos' intercession. The third vision of the plumb line is followed by the only narrative section in the book. The fourth vision pictures Israel as a basket of rotten fruit, overripe for judgment. The fifth vision is a relentless portrayal of Israel's unavoidable judgment. Amos has hammered upon the theme of divine retribution with oracles, sermons, and visions. But God promises to reinstate the Davidic line, to renew the land, and to restore the people.

First, Amos preaches against Damascus, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Syria, Gaza, and Tyre. He preached against all the nations who had long turned their backs on the true God. Next he includes Judah and finally Israel. He mentions the crimes of Hazael and his son Benhadad in the reigns of Jehu and Jehoahaz. Gaza includes Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron and what's left of the Philistines. In regards to Tyre, all of Phoenicia is included. The prophecy

against Tyre was fulfilled during the time of Nebuchadnezzar and his conquest. Judah’s sin was the spurning of God’s Law and Israel’s sin was greed, lust and immorality. In chapter three, the message is only directed to both the Northern and Southern Kingdom. Seven questions are asked to show the righteousness of God’s judgment. The questions demonstrate cause and effect of sin. Amos says that God will smite the altars of the golden calves that were erected by Jeroboam I at Bethel. The fourth chapter dams the high society of Samaritan women who are living in luxurious wantonness. They commit spiritual adultery and their reward will be punishment. Amos calls them again to re-commit themselves to God and calls for repentance. But they have added yet more gods to their pantheon of gods: Moloch and Chium. For this God will cast them away into captivity beyond Damascus. The message of condemnation is addressed to Zion and Samaria. The punishment of Israel will be so great that if there are ten men in the house, not one will be able to escape. This punishment will be to both rich and poor for their waywardness and boastfulness. Chapter seven Amos has a vision of locusts which would destroy the food of Judah and Israel. Version 4 to 6 is a vision of a coming judgment of fire or drought. Then there’s a vision of a plumb line which is a measure by which Israel has failed living up to the laws of God. There will be earthquakes, floods, the sun will be darkened and their songs will be turned into wailings. God will utterly destroy the kingdom of Israel.

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Bible written sometime around 840 BC. It means, ‘Worshiper of Yahweh’ or ‘Servant of Yahweh.’ Little is known about the prophet; some think that he may be one of the four following people: The officer in Ahab’s palace who hid God’s prophets in a cave; one of the officials sent out by Jehoshaphat to teach the law in the cities of Judah; one of the overseers who took part in repairing the temple under Josiah; or a priest in the time of Nehemiah. Obadiah was called to pronounce God’s judgment upon Edom because of Edom’s past treatment of Israel by Edom. He was the first of the minor prophets. Consider the following:

	Judgment on Edom 1 - 18			Restoration 19 - 21
Divisions:	Judgment 1 – 9	Reasons in Judgment 10 – 14	Possession of Edom by Israel 15 - 18	Possession of Edom by Israel 19 - 21
Topics:	Defeat			Victory
	Prediction			Prediction
Place:	Edom and Israel			
Time:	840 BC			

Look at the following outline of Obadiah:

I	Judgment on Edom	1–9
II	Reasons	10–14
III	Results	15–18
IV	Possession by Israel	19–21

Obadiah mentions a battle as the only indication of a time period of the prophet but even this wasn't clear as he leaves the invaders unidentified. However, there was a time during the reign of Jehoram that the Philistines and Arabians invaded Judah and looted the palace. Edom revolted during the reign of Jehoram and became a bitter antagonist. This action by Edom would eventually lead to their downfall. Remember, Edom was considered a brother to Israel. If you want to understand a little about the people earlier in the life of Edom, consider reading Job. This would make the prophet a contemporary of Elisha, and Obadiah would be the earliest of the writing prophets, predating Joel by a few years. Israel has had a long history with Edom.

It began with Esau who was given the name Edom (“Red”) because of the red stew for which he traded his birthright. Esau moved to the mountainous area of Seir and absorbed the Horites, the original inhabitants. Edom refused to allow Israel to pass through their land on the way to Canaan. The Edomites opposed Saul and were subdued under David and Solomon. They fought against Jehoshaphat and successfully rebelled against Jehoram. They were again conquered by Judah under Amaziah, but they regained their freedom during the reign of Ahaz. Edom was later controlled by Assyria and Babylon; and in the fifth century BC. the Edomites were forced by the Nabataeans to leave their territory. They moved to the area of southern Palestine and became known as Idumaeans. Herod the Great, an Idumaeon, became king of Judea under Rome in 37 BC. In a sense, the enmity between Esau and Jacob was continued in Herod's attempt to murder Jesus. The Idumaeans participated in the rebellion of Jerusalem against Rome and were defeated along with the Jews by Titus in AD. 70. Ironically, the Edomites applauded the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC., but died trying to defend it in AD 70. After that time they were never heard of again. As Obadiah predicted they would be ‘cut off forever’; ‘and no survivors shall remain of the house of Esau.’ Obadiah carries a strong message of judgment for Edom. Sadly, their fate is sealed, and there are no conditions for possible deliverance. God will bring total destruction upon Edom, and there will be no remnant. I can't express to you the sadness of this as at one time the people of Edom really knew God and his love. They were considered very wise in the

knowledge of God. There two sections to Obadiah: the judgment of Edom and the restoration of Israel. Edom was arrogant because of its secure position in Mount Seir, a mountainous region south of the Dead Sea. Edom's major crime was gloating over the invasion of Jerusalem. They rejoiced when foreigners plundered Jerusalem, and became as one of them.

We have Jonah, the son of Amittai; his home was a village by the name of Gath-hepher near Nazareth. Of all the minor prophets, Jonah is the most known and taught in many Sunday Schools. Jonah prophesied the destruction of Nineveh which was fulfilled during the reign of Jeroboam II. The time of his calling happened right at the end of Elisha's ministry. Jonah is said to be the Book of Acts in the Old Testament. The Book of Jonah demonstrates God's mercy to the Gentiles, both the sailors on the boat and the people of Assyria when they repented. This is of course a literal history but sadly modernists and liberals teach otherwise.

Jonah lived in the time of Jeroboam II of Israel who came quite a few years after the time of Elisha, but just before Amos and Hosea. As we have already seen, Israel under Jeroboam II was enjoying a period of resurgence and prosperity but deep immorality. Because of weak rulers had ascended the throne, Assyria was in a period of mild decline. However, Assyrian cruelty had become legendary with graphic accounts of their cruel treatment of captives have been found in ancient Assyrian records, especially from the ninth and seventh centuries BC. The repentance of Nineveh probably occurred in the reign of Ashurdan III between 773–755 BC. Two plagues and a solar eclipse may have prepared the people for Jonah's message of judgment. Unlike the other prophetic books, Jonah places more emphasis on the messenger than the message. This biographical book provides a clear character development and portrait of human emotions. In addition, Jonah reveals a universal concern of Yahweh for all people. Nineveh responded more to the preaching of Jonah than Israel and Judah ever responded to any of their Prophets. Jonah has often been challenged because of its miraculous elements, especially the great fish. But this is a preconceived view that does not allow the God of creation to directly use His creation for special purposes.

The Book of Jonah revolves around a gentile nation. In the narrative we have the storm, the lots, the sailors, the fish, the Ninevites, the plant, the worm, and also the east wind. These were used to teach Jonah a lesson in compassion and obedience. The story is divided into two parts: the first commission of Jonah and the second commission of Jonah. Jonah doesn't want to see God spare the notoriously cruel Assyrians so Jonah attempts to go two thousand miles west to Tarshish (Spain). But God prepares a "great fish" to preserve Jonah and deliver him on dry land. While inside the fish, Jonah cries out in prayer and offers

thanksgiving for his deliverance from drowning. Jonah then obeys God and sets out for Nineveh. After they repented, God held back on His destruction. God’s love and grace are contrasted with Jonah’s anger and lack of compassion.

Look at the outline and divisions below:

I The First Commission

- A Disobedience 1:1–3
- B Judgment 1:4–17
 - 1 The Storm 1:4–16
 - 2 Jonah Saved by the Fish 1:17
- C A Prayer 2:1–9
- D Deliverance 2:10

II The Second Commission of Jonah

- A The Obedience to the Second Call 3:1–4
- B The Judgment of Nineveh Averted 3:5–10
 - 1 The Fast 3:5–9
 - 2 Nineveh saved by God 3:10
- C The Prayer of Jonah 4:1–3
- D God Rebukes Jonah 4:4–11

	First Commission 1:1 – 2:10				Second Commission 3:1 – 4:11			
Divisions:	Disobedience to the First Call 1:1 – 1:3	Judgment on Jonah Exacted 1:4 – 1:17	Prayer of Jonah in the Fish 2:1 – 2:9	Deliverance of Jonah from the Fish 2:10	Obedience to the Second Call 3:1 – 3:4	Judgment of Nineveh Averted 3:5 – 3:10	Prayer of Jonah 4:1 – 4:3	Rebuke Of Jonah 4:4 – 4:11
Topics:	God’s Mercy on Jonah				God’s Mercy on Nineveh			
	I won’t go		I will go		I’m here		I shouldn’t have come	
Place:	The Great Sea				The Great City			
Time:	760 BC							

The localities of the places mentioned in Jonah are even a long distance apart today: Nineveh, the infamous city of the Assyrian Empire was perhaps a thousand kilometres northeast of Israel. And of course, Joppa, or ladder day Jaffa is near Tel Aviv; but Tarshish was far to the west in Spain, thousands of kilometres from Israel. No soon had the ship set sale, a large gale arose that violently shook the ship. The crew tossed Jonah overboard and God’s miracle of providing a large fish or whale and preserving Jonah while he was in its

belly gave Jonah another chance. Jonah prayed a prayer of repentance while in the belly of the whale. As the author puts it here, there is no room for allegory; this ordeal in the belly of the whale is real. Instead of Tarshish, Jonah now heads for Nineveh. The city is so large that Jonah travelled for twenty miles into its streets and avenues and preached God’s word to them and warned them that unless they repent God would destroy their city. The city repented which took Jonah by surprise because he only felt that the city deserved to be destroyed because of its terrible wickedness. He went out of the city depressed and rested where God provided shade for him in terms of a gourd which he destroyed the next night as a lesson for Jonah. Jonah appreciated the shade from the plant and was angry when God destroyed it. Jonah had pity on the plant and God ask whether he had the right to have pity on the people of city.

Micah was contemporary to Isaiah, one of the most notable prophets in the Old Testament. He prophesied during the long years of Isaiah’s ministry. Micah’s time stretched through the reigns of the Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah in Judah. Micah was a peasant from the village of Moresheth in the south-western countryside of Judah. He attacked such social sins as exploitation of the weak. He fearlessly denounced the sins of Judah. Micah exposes the injustices that was going on in Judah and compared it to the righteousness and justice of Yahweh. About one-third of the book indicts Israel and Judah for sins of oppression, bribery, exploitation of the poor, covetousness, cheating, violence, and pride. Micah predicts the judgment that will result. The last part of the book is a message of hope and consolation where justice will triumph with the coming of a Deliverer. The goodness and severity of God are demonstrated in Micah’s presentation of divine judgment and pardon. The book emphasizes an integral relationship between true spirituality and social ethics. Chapter 6, verse 8, summarizes what God wants to see in His people: justice and equity tempered with mercy and compassion as the result of a humble and obedient heart.

Look at the Divisions of Micah and the book’s outline below:

	Prediction of Judgment 1:1 – 3:12		Prediction of Restoration 4:1 – 5:15			Cry for Repentance 6:1 – 7:20		
Divisions:	Judgment on People 1:1 – 2:13	Judgment on Leaders 3:1 – 3:12	The Coming Kingdom 4:1 – 4:5	The Coming Captivity 4:6 – 5:1	The Coming King 5:2 – 5:15	Cry of God 6:1 – 6:9	Cry of God 6:10 – 7:6	Promise of Final Salvation 7:7 – 7:20
Topics:	Punishment Retribution		Promise Restoration			Pardon Repentance		
Place:	Judah and Israel							
Time:	735 – 710 BC							

I	Judgment	
A	Introduction	1:1
B	Judgment	
1	on Samaria	1:2–8
2	on Judah	1:9–16
3	Cause	2:1–11
4	Restoration	2:12–13
C	The Judgment on the Leadership	
1	on Princes	3:1–4
2	on Prophets	3:5–8
3	Promise of Judgment	3:9–12
II	Restoration	
A	the Coming Kingdom	4:1–5
B	the Coming Captivities	4:6–5:1
C	the Coming King	
1	The Messiah	5:2
2	The Rejection of the Messiah	5:3
3	The Messiah’s work	5:4–15
III	Cry for Repentance	
A	First Cry of God	
1	God Pleads	6:1–5
2	Micah Replies	6:6–9
B	The Second Plea of God	
1	God Pleads	6:10–16
2	Micah Replies	7:1–6
C	Promise of Salvation	7:7–20

Micah is the prophet of the downtrodden and exploited people of Judean society. There were social injustices in the land. The book is characterized by future judgment, restoration and a plea for repentance. Micah went to the very top of the governments in Samaria and Jerusalem. Both kingdoms will be overthrown because of their actions. Micah then moves into a two-chapter message of hope with a gradual focus narrowing down to the King. Everyone has rejected God’s grace. In verse 1:2-8, we have a message of doom to

Samaria. Micah was so indignant to what was happening there. Their punishment would be so great as to leave the land utterly desolate. The Northern Kingdom had become such a bad place as Baalism had become so great in the Kingdom. In 1:9-16 Micah gave a message of doom also to Jerusalem. The prophecy included twelve Judean cities around about his town. Chapter two indicts Samaria and Jerusalem for other crimes and provides a vivid picture of how they will suffer. Chapter four rebounds and describes an age to come after the Babylonian Captivity of a time that will match that of Solomon. Then he goes forward in time and describes how nations will be gathered against Mount Zion. In chapter five a new Jewish ruler is seen to arise from the town of Bethlehem which will be no ordinary human. He will save the people from their enemies. But then jumps back and says that restoration cannot come without repentance and sacrifices cannot do it alone. Micah, himself, confesses Israel's sin to God. He finishes his preaching up with a peek at Christ's eventual millennial rule.

Nahum is mentioned by name only in the book and interestingly the city of Capernaum means 'City of Nahum'. Some think that this city was indeed named in honour of Nahum. The Book of Nahum is all about the destruction of Nineveh. As shown above under Jonah's preaching the city of Nineveh had repented, but a hundred years later, God proclaimed through Nahum the downfall of the city again because of their wickedness. Babylon will destroy the city to the point no trace of it will remain a prophecy fulfilled in painful detail. The fall of Nineveh to the Babylonians in 612 BC is seen by Nahum as a future event. Critics who deny predictive prophecy naturally date Nahum after 612 BC but this is not based upon exegetical or historical considerations. The Assyrians returned to their evil practices and in 722 BC Sargon II of Assyria destroyed Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, and scattered the ten tribes. Led by Sennacherib, the Assyrians also came close to capturing Jerusalem in the reign of King Hezekiah in 701 BC. By the time of Nahum (c. 660 BC), Assyria reached the peak of its prosperity and power under Ashurbanipal (669–633 BC). This king extended Assyria's influence farther than had any of his predecessors. Nineveh became the mightiest city on earth with walls 100 feet high and wide enough to accommodate three chariots riding abreast. Placed around the walls were huge towers that stretched an additional 100 feet above the top of the walls. In addition, the walls were surrounded by a moat 150 feet wide and 60 feet deep. Nineveh appeared impregnable and could withstand a twenty-year siege. Thus, Nahum's prophecy of Nineveh's overthrow seemed unlikely. Nahum predicted that Nineveh would end 'with an overflowing flood,' and

this is precisely what occurred. The Tigris River overflowed its banks and the resulting flood destroyed part of Nineveh’s wall. The Babylonians invaded through this breach in the wall, plundered the city, and set it on fire. Nahum also predicted that Nineveh would be hidden. After its destruction in 612 BC, the site was not discovered until AD. 1842.

Nahum is one of the three prophets who have focused on Judah’s enemies. The other two are Obadiah (Edom) and Habakkuk (Babylonia). Nahum was very specific about the details of the destruction of Nineveh: It was to be destroyed by a flood and by fire; the profaning of Nineveh’s temples and images; the city never to be rebuilt; the leaders will flee; the easy capture of the fortresses around the city; the destruction of the gates; and the lengthy siege and frantic efforts to strengthen its defences. All these events have been authenticated in archaeological finds and historical accounts. There are only forty-seven verses to the book but it has fifty references to nature. However, hardly anything is said about Judah in this book except for a few comments. As for as literature is concerned; Findlay says that the book ranks high if not the best in terms of Hebrew literature. There’s a unit of conception about it with an artistic handling of its theme. It also contains a wealth of metaphors and descriptive language with a deep purposeful passion of authoritative language. Look at the following divisions and outline of the Book of Nahum:

	Destruction Foretold 1:1 – 1:15		Destruction Described 2:1 – 2:13		Reason for the Destruction 3:1 – 3:19	
Divisions:	Principles of Judgment 1:1 – 1:8	Destruction Deliverance 1:9 – 1:15	A Call to Battle 2:1 – 2:22	Description 2:3 – 2:13	Reasons for 3:1 – 3:7	Destruction will happen 3:12 – 3:19
Topics:	Final Decision		Vision of Vengeance		Vindication of Vengeance	
	What God Will Do		How God Will do it		Why God Will do it	
Place:	In Judah against Nineveh, Capital of Assyria					
Time:	660 BC					

- I Destruction of Nineveh
 - A General Principles
 - 1 God’s Vengeance 1:1–2
 - 2 God’s Power 1:3–8
 - B Destruction of Nineveh and Deliverance of Judah 1:9–15
- II Destruction Explained
 - A Going into Battle 2:1–2
 - B Destruction of Nineveh 2:3–13
- III Reason for Destruction

- A Reasons for the Destruction
 - 1 Nineveh's Ungodliness 3:1-7
 - 2 Comparison of Nineveh to Amon 3:8-11
- B Destruction of Nineveh Is Inevitable
 - 1 Nineveh has Weak Strongholds 3:12-15
 - 2 Nineveh has Weak Leaders 3:16-3:19

Nineveh was situated on the eastern side of the Tigris. It was the largest city in the world with towers, numbering 1,200 spanning over 200 feet high with walls of 100 feet tall. The width of those walls equalled to a two lane highway. The foundations of the wall consisted of polished stone and the city was 60 miles in circumference. There were huge lions and sculptured stone bulls at the cities' gates. For 600 years the Assyrians were a feared violence people who ruled with tyranny and violence.

Now we come to Habbakkuk, whose name means, 'embrace.' The book is considered the beginnings of Hebrew reflective thinking. A new world scene existed; the Assyrians had been brought to their knees, literally and totally destroyed and now the Babylonians were the ruling power. But you need to understand that from hundreds of years pass, Nineveh was at first a colony of Babylon but down through the ages they warred against each other with Nineveh eventually becoming the strongest and a most evil people. There is nothing known about Habbakkuk as a person except that the book was most likely written during the early part of Jehoiakim's reign (609-597 BC). Jehoiakim was a godless king who led the nation down the path of destruction. Israel had been taken into captivity as much as a hundred years earlier by the Assyrians.

The Babylonians had begun to rise in power during the reign of Nabopolassar between 626-605 BC, and in 612 BC, they destroyed the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. By the time of Jehoiakim, Babylon was the uncontested world power. The infamous Nebuchadnezzar came to power in 605 BC and carried out successful military expeditions in the west, advancing into Palestine and Egypt. His first invasion of Judah occurred in his first year, when he deported ten thousand of Jerusalem's leaders to Babylon. The nobles who oppressed and extorted from the poor were the first to be carried away. Since Habakkuk prophesied prior to the Babylonian invasion, the probable date for this book is c. 607 BC. But the Babylonians were only temporary as in seventy years time; they too would be a forgotten memory to be conquered by the Persians.

The book is aimed at God asking questions about the sufferings of God’s people and the prosperity of the wicked. He is also known as the prophet of faith as quoted in chapter 1:12-17, ‘the just shall live by faith.’ But Habakkuk struggled in his faith when he saw men flagrantly violate God’s law and distort justice on every level without any fear. He wanted to know why God was allowing growing iniquity to go unpunished. When God revealed His intention to use Babylonia as His rod of judgment, Habakkuk had become even more upset for he knew that nation was much more corrupt than Judah. After two rounds of dialogue with the Lord, Habakkuk’s increased understanding of the person, power, and plan of God caused him to conclude with a song of praise.

Habakkuk’s first conversation took place in chapter 1, verses 1–11 where the prophet asks God how long He would allow the wickedness of Judah to go unpunished. The answer lead to another conversation where the prophet question became more perplex by asking how a righteous God can punish Judah with a nation that which is more wicked. Look at the following outline of Habakkuk and the following focus on the book:

- I Difficulties of Habakkuk
 - A The First Difficulty 1:1–4
 - B God’s Reply 1:5–11
 - C The Second Difficulty 1:12–2:1
 - D God’s Reply 2:2–20
- II Praise of Habakkuk
 - A Habakkuk Prays for Mercy 3:1–2
 - B Habakkuk Remembers God’s Mercy
 - 1 The Glory of God 3:3–4
 - 2 God’s Saving Acts 3:5–15
 - C Habakkuk Trusts in God’s Salvation 3:16–19

	Problems of Habakkuk				Praise of Habakkuk
	1:1 – 2:20				3:1 – 3:19
Divisions:	1 st Difficulty 1:1 – 1:4	1 st Reply 1:5 – 1:11	2 nd Difficulty 1:12 – 2:1	2 nd Reply 2:2 – 2:20	Prayer of Praise 3:1 – 3:19
Topics:	Faith Troubled				Faith Triumphant
	What God is Doing				Who God Is
Place:	The Nation of Judah				
Time:	607 BC				

Verses 1:1-4 show us that Habakkuk is required to live in the midst of violent wrong doing with oppression of the righteous by wicked people.

Verses 1:5-11 reveals God's plan of bringing the Chaldeans to overwhelm the whole world. Jerusalem will not share the fate of other cities.

Verses 1:12-17 tells us that the Chaldeans have now come to Palestine. Habakkuk realizes that these people are more cruel and evil than his own people in Judah. How could God allow this.

Verses 2:1-4 is told to write down for all to read that the purpose of God will soon be fulfilled. Then follows the well known verse: 'behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him: but the just shall live in his faithfulness.' Explained, tyranny is self-destructive, and carries within itself the seeds of doom. The evil doer will pass away but the just shall live and last out the storm of judgment.

Verses 2:5-20 explains how the prophet speaks out a series of five woes against pride, greed, cruel enterprises, sensuality, idolatry and heathen power.

Verses 3 tell us how the prophet turns to singing the redeeming acts of God and declaring his unwavering trust in Him.

The minor prophet, Zephaniah means, 'the Lord Hides.' The Prophet is a descendant of King Hezekiah who purified the Temple worship in 716 BC. Again the main theme is the 'Day of the Lord.' There's a dating problem with the Book of Zephaniah. His time seems to have come after the prophet Nahum and before the Godly King Josiah who reigned in 640 BC. The reforms which Josiah had made had also affected the Northern Kingdom. Most of Zephaniah describes the coming Day of Judgment upon Judah and the nations. This also refers to the phrase, the Day of Lord. It seems to be a book of gloom and doom with God declaring what will happen. In the book, Jerusalem has become a place of spiritual rebellion and moral treachery. God is holy and must show His righteousness by calling all the nations of the world into account for their wickedness. God will judge not only His own people but also the whole world. The day of the Lord will have universal effect. That day came but there was a future aspect to this prophecy when all the earth will be judged. The book also warns Judah to repent. God's judgment would be great, but God promised His people a future with hope and joy. Time wise, we see that Zephaniah was decades before the fall of Jerusalem and Habakkuk was just before the fall of Jerusalem and then we have Lamentations was just after the fall of Jerusalem. These points help in clarifying the timeline so that we can understand the overall image of what's being portrayed. In Zephaniah we have a declaration

of the trouble to come when God will judge Judah, whereas in Habakkuk, there becomes a certainty where God shows his strength in the form of a dialogue with Habakkuk but in Lamentations, God has already judged, showing the destruction that has already come about. Look at the outline below, again from Tow. I want to remind you that quotes from Two is integrated throughout this essay.

I	Judgment	
A	The Judgment on the Whole World	
B	on the Nation of Judah	
1	Causes	1:4–13
2	Description	1:14–18
3	Repentance	2:1–3
C	The Judgment of the Nations	
1	against Philistia in the West	2:4–7
2	against Moab and Ammon in the East	2:8–11
3	against Ethiopia in the South	2:12
4	against Assyria in the North	2:13–15
D	The Judgment on Jerusalem	
1	Jerusalem’s Injustice	3:1–4
2	Justice	3:5–7
E	The Judgment on the Whole World	3:8
II	Salvation	
A	Conversion	3:9–13
B	Restoration	3:14–20

Chapter one tells us that the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar is at hand. The immediate destruction will be directed toward the idols and false gods such as Baal and the feminine deity Ashtoreth and the religion of Saheanism of the sun, moon and stars. There was also Moloch, the god of the Ammons and the backsliders. Punishment will also come to those of the low place in Jerusalem where those who was no longer interested in God or what He would do. Chapter Two comes with the pronouncing judgements on the nations like Philistia, Moab, and Ammon which had become like Sodom and Gomorrah. There will be destruction of Assyria, Egypt and Ethiopia. Chapter three shows the destruction of Jerusalem. It is because of their wickedness and will be directed to their princes, priests and false prophets. After this Israel will be blessed and become a great nation with Jerusalem a bubbling city.

Haggai's name is mentioned a number of times in the book. In addition Ezra references him two times. Remember Ezra, this was about the time of the return from Exile. There is a certain unity of theme and style about Haggai. The basic theme surrounds the Remnant who must reorder its priorities and complete the building of the temple before they can expect the blessing of God upon their efforts. The situation was, the work on the temple had ceased, and the people had become more concerned with fixing up their own houses. Because of their misplaced priorities, they were experiencing indifference in responding to God's word. Haggai tried to tell them that when they put God first and seek to do His will, they would then experience joy and prosperity. He also worked alongside the Prophet Zechariah in encouraging the people in Jerusalem. Some think that Haggai was born in Judah before 586 BC, so he was about 75 years of age when he prophesied in 520 BC. He had returned to Jerusalem with the Remnant under Zerubbabel and evidently lived in Jerusalem. Haggai's four messages: completing the temple, the glory of the temple, blessings in obedience and future promise all brought immediate result as the people that to again work on the Temple. Look at the outline below:

I	Completion of the Temple	
A	Is Not Complete	1:1-6
B	Must Be Completed	1:7-15
II	Glory of the Temple	
A	Temple Is Not as Glorious as the First	2:1-3
B	Temple Will Be More Glorious than the First	2:4-9
III	Present Blessings of Obedience	
A	The Disobedience of the Remnant	2:10-14
B	The Solution: The Obedience of the Remnant	2:15-19
IV	Future Blessings	
A	Future Destruction of the Nations	2:20-22
B	Future Recognition of Zerubbabel	2:23

The first message from 1:1-11 was about the troubles they were facing which Haggai said was the results of the displeasure of God. In 2:1-9 a word of encouragement was given that God would supply all their needs. The temple would not compare to Solomon's temple but it would be God's Temple. There was a Word of blessing in 2:10-19 that the Lord would turn their cursing into blessing. Finally the prophet gave a Word of confirmation in chapter 2:20-23 that God's servant sent to rebuild His House would be confirmed in his appointment.

Now we have Zechariah, the name means ‘the Lord remembers.’ Zechariah along with Haggai and Malachi are post exilic prophets. He was born in Babylon of a priestly family and was among the first group of 50,000 Jews to return. Zechariah was both a priest and prophet. Look at the divisions of Zechariah below:

	Eight Visions 1:1-6:15			Four Messages 7:1 – 8:23	Two Difficulties in regards to the Messiah 9:1 – 14:21	
Divisions	Repent! 1:1 – 1:6	Visions 1:7 – 6:8	Crowning 6:9 – 6:15	Fasts 7:1 – 8:23	Rejection 9:1 – 11:17	Reign 12:1 – 14:21
Topics:	Pictures			Difficulties	Look into the Future	
	Israel’s Fortune			Fasting	Future of Israel	
Time:	During the building of the Temple 520 – 518 BC				Afterwards 480 – 470 BC	

Zechariah is a major work and the longest book of the Minor Prophets. You could even call it a ‘major minor prophet.’ Now that is an interesting use of words. It consists of a number of messianic passages. The first eight chapters refer to the temple quite a bit and also encouraged people to complete the work. This book was written to outline God’s programme for His people and to promote spiritual growth. Zechariah contains visions, messages, and apocalyptic oracles. Similar to Daniel, Zechariah emphasizes the history of Israel during their captivity; Daniel also develops God’s prophetic plan for the Gentiles. Haggai and Zechariah worked together in motivating the returnees to build the temple.

Zechariah experienced eight different visions, gave four messages, and experienced two difficulties in order to show God’s plans for His people. The book divides into the eight visions (1–6), the four messages (7–8), and the two difficulties (9–14). The visions included an angel interprets the visions. The first five are those of comfort while the last three are those of judgment: There are horsemen among the myrtle trees, then four horns and craftsmen. The next shows a man with a measuring line and the cleansing of Joshua the high priest is another vision. Another vision shows a olden lamp stand and the next one after shows a flying scroll. The seventh vision reveals a woman in the basket while the eighth has four chariots. God then gives Zechariah four messages: rebuking empty ritualism, past disobedience, the restoration of Israel and the experience of joy for the people. Following this is two difficulties, one concerns rejection of Israel’s coming King. The second difficulty concerns the second coming of Christ. The nations will attack Jerusalem, but the Messiah will come and deliver His people. Look at this outline:

I Repentance

1:1–6

II Eight Visions

A	The Horses	1:7–17
B	The Four Horns and Craftsmen	1:18–21
C	The Measuring Line	2:1–13
D	The Cleansing of Joshua	3:1–10
E	The Golden Lamp stand	4:1–14
F	The Flying Scroll	5:1–4
G	The Woman in the Basket	5:5–11
H	The Four Chariots	6:1–8

III Crowning 6:9–15

IV Fasting 7:1–3

V The Four Messages

A	Hypocrisy	7:4–7
B	Disobedience	7:8–14
C	Restoration	8:1–17
D	Rejoice	8:18–23

VI The Two Difficulties

A	1 st : The Rejection of the Messiah	
1	Judgment on Surrounding Nations	9:1–8
2	1 st & 2 nd Coming of the Messiah	9:9-10:12
3	Rejection of the Messiah	11:1–17
B	2 nd : The Reign of the Messiah	
1	Deliverance	
a	Salvation of Judah	12:1–9
b	Spiritual Salvation	12:10–13:9
2	Reign of the Messiah	
a	Final Siege of Jerusalem	14:1–2
b	Second Coming of the Messiah	14:3–8
c	Kingdom of the Messiah	14:9–21

Zechariah began to prophesy only two months after Haggai which was around 520 BC. His ‘gift’ of prophesy was much more involved than that of Haggai. The book is divided up into two sections: Chapters 1 – 8 and chapters 9 – 14 and it could also be outlined Visions,

Questions and Burdens. We start with the first section in chapter one which contains four visions: like the horsemen in Revelation 6:1-8, the horsemen in this vision are red, speckled and white. They are sent to go through the earth and then to report back what they had seen. The Vision of the Four Horns is a symbol for power. According to the author, this may refer to the four empires: Babylonia, Persia, Greece and Rome. Then follows four carpenters who are God's workmen to will come to do away with atrocities that are perpetrated by the Gentile power. Chapter Two involves a man with a measuring line. He will measure the length and width of Jerusalem and they assist in the rebuilding the city. Chapter Three contains a Vision of the High Priest. Zechariah sees Joshua the high priest being resisted by the devil before the angel of the Lord. God rebukes Satan for his fault finding. The Lord gives Joshua a new change of clothing showing that his sins are forgiven. Chapter Four tells us about the Vision of the Golden Candlestick where we see a bowl and seven pipes to the seven lamps. Then standing on the sides are two olive trees with two pipes protruding from two of its branches. The meaning is concerned with the use of the power of God to rebuild the Temple. The two olive trees represent the two leaders God is using in the reconstruction. Chapter Five brings us the vision of the flying roll which is used for writing. These contain commandments from the tables of the law which forbids taking God's name in vain and curses those who forswear. The chapter also give us the vision of the woman in the ephah which is measure of capacity equalling 36 litres. This was used commercial transactions measuring whatever was brought or sold. This has to do with spiritual adultery, ecclesiastical power married to political power. The riches of the wealthy have become tainted and corrupt. They will not be able to escape the wrath of God. Chapter Six tells of the significance of the four chariots. The four horsemen and their red, black, white and bay horses where white represent peace and prosperity, red represent ward and bloodshed and black represent famine and pestilence and grey represents death and hell. The horsemen are the angels of peace and prosperity until the red horseman comes with a sword to take peace away from the earth. Zechariah 6:5 says, 'and the angel answered and said, these are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.' Next three men come with gifts for the rebuilding of the Temple from Babylon. They made a double crown and crowned Joshua as a symbolic of the coming Messiah. Chapter Seven deals with the fasting the Jews had been doing but the Lord said that obedience was better before as they should have listened to the prophets. Chapter Eight shows how the rebuilding is progressing and Jews are returning from all over the world and God would again bless the Land He had given them.

The second part of the book starts with chapter nine and goes through to chapter fourteen which looks at the future rather than at the times of the Prophet Zechariah. This future is Israel at the second coming of Christ but first Chapters nine and ten deals with the coming empire of Greece with chapter eleven dealing with the Roman Empire. There will be earthly blessings. There's a vision of the Messiah riding on a donkey in Matthew 21:5; verse nine refers to Christ's first coming, verse ten refers to his second coming. The author now relates to the recent history of Israel over the past fifty years to Chapter Eleven. The author mentions since Israel rejected the Messiah, they have accepted shepherds such as Herod the Great and Ptolemy IV. These shepherds are wicked people who mistreat the sheep. Chapter Twelve to Fourteen tells of the future enforced peace of the Anti-Christ which will be followed by war. The battle will be the battle of battles with the Lord returning to put the rebellion down. The Jews will cry for the Lord's help and will come to salvation and cleansing. There will be a casting out of false prophets, mediums and idols. Only one-third of Israel will survive to go into the Millennial Kingdom. It talks about living water flowing out of Jerusalem to the Med Sea and the Dead Sea. Like the prophet Ezekiel, Zechariah speaks of what will be and what will happen after the great battle. This life giving water is not the same as in Revelation 22 but it is a picture of Israel.

Malachi is the last of the Old Testament prophets. He was the last before the long silence between the Old and New Testament. Malachi's name means 'messenger of God.' The next prophet that was to arise would be John the Baptist introducing the coming of Jesus. The years were 432 to 425 BC and Malachi's preaching was brought on by corrupt priests and people who neglected their tithes and offerings, and intermarriage with pagan wives. Interestingly, of all the books, God spoke the most in the Book of Malachi than any of the other Minor Prophets. Background information shows that Nehemiah had come to Jerusalem in 444 BC to help with the rebuilding of the city walls, thirteen years after Ezra's return and reforms in 457 BC. But Nehemiah returned to Persia in 432 BC and then returned to Palestine again around 425 BC. His purpose was to deal with the sins which Malachi described. Look at the outline below:

I	Privileges	1:1–5
II	Pollution	1:6–3:15
A	Sins of the Priests	
1	The Lord is Despised	1:6–14
2	The Priests are Cursed	2:1–9

B	Israel's Sin	
1	Idolatry of the People	2:10–13
2	Divorce	2:14–16
3	The Lord will come to Judge	2:17–3:5
4	They Rob God	3:6–12
5	They Doubt the Character of God	3:13–15

III Promises to Israel

A	Book of Remembrance	3:16–18
B	The Coming of Christ	4:1–3
C	Prophecy of the Coming of Elijah	4:4-6

The Temple had been finished for a hundred years and revival had happened under Ezra and Nehemiah. It was a sad situation as people had returned to their old ways forsaking God once again. The priests had gone astray leaving the precepts of God. Sorcery, adultery, perjury, fraud and oppression were prolific and they laughed at God. They turned to the nations and peoples around them once again becoming like them. The offerings and tithes had been stopped that were given to support the Levites in their service to the Temple Worship. Malachi's preached against their religious, moral social and material neglect.

So this concludes the Minor Prophets, a time covering 400 years of history. The next prophet would not appear for another 400 years and that would be John the Baptist, the last of the 'Old Testament' prophets. God chose to leave the Jews to themselves. He had done everything He could do to get them to trust in Him, from destroying the ten tribes, to the captivity of Judah, herself. He had sent Prophet after Prophet to them crying out to them but they continued their down hill drop of their wicked ways. There was Obadiah who spoke judgement to Edom and then Joel warning them of the Day of the Lord. Amos told of the coming doom to the Northern Kingdom with Hosea who demonstrated the ever so loyal love of God to the people. So the next time God would directly speak to them, He would come Himself and be one among them and institute a whole new relationship through Jesus Christ. Micah was sent to tell of the Judgment and Restoration of Judah whose covenant would be fulfilled in the Messiah's future kingdom. God even sent prophets like Jonah and Nahum to mighty cities like Nineveh and still people wouldn't listen. Again the great Day of the Lord would follow judgement as proclaimed by Zephaniah. Habakkuk came with a warning of the coming Babylonians but also a message of how His people were to learn to live by faith in God. The next three prophets; Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were those associated with the

returned remnant. Haggai encouraged the Jews to put God first and finish the temple. Zechariah brought a message of encouragement for the Jews to complete the Temple and a message to prepare for the coming Messiah. A hundred years had passed and the people had grown cold against the Lord. Malachi appealed and rebuked them for their compromising ways.

Over the years I have personally wondered why the Books of the Minor Prophets were not arranged in linear order. In this study, I have attempted to consider them in this linear order and have found that they make much more sense to me. I'm sure there was a reason why they were accepted as they were. There was much doom and gloom in these writings, but that was the sign of the times! God tried so hard to convince Israel and the nations to repent. The lives of the Israelites and Jews and other nations had turned so far away from God that God could not wait any longer; a prophet was raised up to tell them what God thought. I was able to see a picture or purposely established course of action God had lain out with these twelve prophets to show not only His rejection of sin but also His feelings, His sadness and that He would do anything to get his people to turn back to Him.

Interesting in regards to Zephaniah, he seems to have come after the prophet Nahum and before the Godly King Josiah who reigned in 640 BC. The reforms which Josiah had made had also affected the Northern Kingdom. Now according to the author, in referring to the Godly reforms Josiah had made, also affecting the Northern Kingdom. But the Northern Kingdom had long been carried off into captivity. Was there a remnant still left in Israel? One gets the picture that all of the tribes had been taken into captivity.

Unlike other prophetic books, The Book of Habakkuk is addressed to God asking questions about the sufferings of God's people and the prosperity of the wicked. This topic has arisen over and over again. It's come up several times in the Book of Psalms and in the New Testament. God has given his answer to the question over and over again but the question is still set before us today! It's still be asked by Christians and non-Christians alike. Why does God allow sufferings of God's people and prosperity of the wicked? Is it that we do not understand God's answers in the Bible or that we do not accept his answers!

Wilkinson and Boa helped me with some missing facts that I needed to develop my own picture of their history. I would have also liked to have read how the Major Prophets fitted into the 400 year decline along with those eight Godly kings in Judah, but this study had to be limited somehow.

References

- A Comprehensive Survey of the Bible by Chuck Missler of Koinonia House ‘Learn the Bible in 24 Hours’. Downloaded from www.khouse.org (24 lectures).
- Archaeological Study Bible, 2005 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan USA NIV
- Archaeology Study Bible, ESV 2016 by Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois USA, Good News Publishers, Printed in China
- Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, NIV 2016 Published by Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- OT Survey – OT500 by Dr Douglas Stuart – *Conwell Theological Seminary at <http://www.biblicaltraining.org/classes/institute/classes> (37 lectures). Textbook – Gordon D, Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all Its Worth*, 2nd ed., (Zondervan, 1993).*
- Systematic Theology Study Bible – Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois – ESV.Org English Standard Version.
- Tenney, M. 1976. The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopaedia of the Bible, Regency Reference Library, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- The Apologetics Study Bible – Understand Why You Believe. 2007. Holman, Nashville, Tennessee
- Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, New International Version. © 1982 by The B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, Inc. Indianapolis, Indiana, USA. The Minor Prophets pp 920 - 981 (61 pages)
- Tow, T. © 2001 ‘The Minor Prophets’ and published by Far Eastern Bible College Press, Singapore.
- Wilkinson B. & Boa, K. ‘Talk Through the Bible’ Copyright by Thomas Nelson Publishers