

# Church of God

## Sunday School

### THE BIBLE — THE MINOR PROPHETS



#### DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** Joel tells of the coming of the Gospel Day (Joel 2:28-32).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** God shows great mercy to the Ninevites (Jonah 3:10; 4:9-11).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** Micah tells of the birthplace of the coming Savior (Micah 5:2).
- ❑ **Thursday:** The just will live by faith (Habakkuk 2:1-4).
- ❑ **Friday:** Excuses given for not putting God first (Haggai 1:1-5).
- ❑ **Saturday:** "The Sun of righteousness" (Jesus) is coming (Malachi 4:1-6).

**MEMORY VERSE:** *"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."*  
—2 Peter 1:21

#### The "Book of the Twelve"

In Hebrew tradition the last 12 books of the Old Testament are called "Book of the Twelve" or "The Twelve-Prophet Book." The writings of these books were combined into one large scroll. (Possibly, this was because separate rolls of each book could have been easily lost.) Later, this "Book of the Twelve" was divided into 12 separate books. These books are written in a variety of styles, some are longer (Hosea has 14 chapters) and some are very short (Obadiah has 21 verses). They also cover a large span of time. Yet, a common theme throughout all the books of prophecy is "Thus saith the LORD." Each prophet received his message from God.

**During King Rehoboam's reign  
Israel split into two kingdoms:**

**Israel (the northern kingdom)  
Judah (the southern kingdom)**

#### Classification of the Prophets

All 17 prophetic books are not in chronological order. Because of this, it might be confusing when each prophet lived and who his message was for. There are a few prophets whose timeline placement is not easily established (Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah). Some historians disagree on exactly when these prophets lived. For the purpose of

this lesson, we will place them before the time of captivity (Israel by the Assyrians and Judah by the Babylonians).

**BEFORE CAPTIVITY:** Jonah and Nahum (to Nineveh); Amos and Hosea (to Israel); Joel, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk (to Judah); Obadiah (to Edom); and Micah (to Israel & Judah).

**DURING CAPTIVITY:** Daniel and Ezekiel (in Babylon).

**AFTER CAPTIVITY:** Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi (to Jerusalem).

From the time of Malachi to John the Baptist (at least 400 years), there was no true prophet proclaiming God's message. These years were called the "years of silence."

#### Books of the Minor Prophets

**HOSEA:** this name means "salvation." Commentators say Hosea's wife (Gomer) was unfaithful to him and left him for "her lovers" (2:7). This personal suffering helped Hosea understand God's grief when Israel (God's wife, spiritually speaking) worshiped idols (spiritual adultery). Hosea is believed to have bought Gomer back from slavery. In other words, he "redeemed" her.



Years later, Jesus paid the ultimate redemption price by giving His life on Calvary.

**JOEL:** the name *Joel* means "Yahweh is God." (Yahweh is another name for Jehovah.) Huge swarms of locusts and a terrible drought had destroyed Judah's crops. Joel prophesied that something worse was coming. Joel also prophesied of a time when God's Spirit would be poured out on His people (2:28-32). This was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. Peter said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:14-18).

**AMOS:** Amos was a shepherd who lived in Judah but was called to prophesy to Israel. His name means "to lift a burden" or "burden bearer." Amos carried the burdens of the people (the poor were often cheated and oppressed), and he also bore the burden of declaring coming judgment. Because Amos lived in a time of physical prosperity and Israel's enemies were weak, the people did not believe Amos' prophecies would come true.

**OBADIAH:** this name means "worshiper of Jehovah." Through Obadiah God sent warnings of coming judgment to the people of Edom because of their sins against the people of Judah. (The Edomites were descendants of Esau.) In time these prophecies came true, and the nation of Edom was destroyed. We can also read of the promise of Israel's restoration in verses 19-21.

**JONAH:** the name *Jonah* means "a dove." (Perhaps the description of a dove in Hosea 7:11 and 11:11 is fitting.) Jonah was to take God's message to the people of Nineveh (the capital of Assyria). These were Israel's hated enemies who would later conquer and enslave the people of Israel. This book shows us that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). The three days and three nights Jonah spent in the "great fish" (1:17) is a picture of the three days and three nights Jesus spent in the grave (Matthew 12:40-41). This is called a "type."



**MICAH:** Micah's message was of coming judgment because of sin. He also prophesied of coming restoration through grace. He foretold the birthplace of the Messiah (Bethlehem; 5:2). His name means "who is like Jehovah."

**NAHUM:** about 150 years after Jonah preached to Nineveh, God sent Nahum to Nineveh with a message concerning the coming destruction and the reason for it. Nahum's message was not received as Jonah's had been. The Ninevites did not repent. Previously, Israel had been captured by the Assyrians, and now Judah was being troubled by the Assyrians. Nahum's message of judgment against this wicked people was a comfort to the people of Judah. How fitting that Nahum means "comfort" or "consolation." The literal destruction of Nineveh happened just as Nahum prophesied.

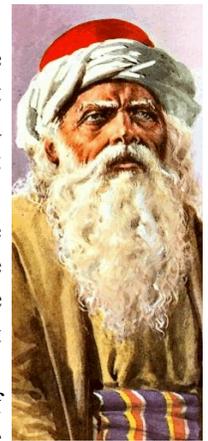
**HABAKKUK:** this name means "the one who embraces." In other words, Habakkuk held on to God no matter what happened. Repeated calls to the people of Judah to repent were ignored. Soon after, 10,000 Jews were taken into captivity. The style of this book is a series of questions and answers to and from God. Habakkuk tells us "the just shall live by his faith" (2:4), a theme that is repeated by Paul (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11) and the Hebrew writer (Hebrews 10:38).

**ZEPHANIAH:** this prophet was a descendant of King Hezekiah, and his name means "Jehovah hides." He was a prophet during the early part of King Josiah's reign. (In the later part of his reign, a spiritual revival took place.) His message was of coming judgment, but to the faithful, Zephaniah brought words of comfort. Although this book begins with words of judgment, the last part of it has been described as "one of the sweetest songs of the Old Testament." The day of the Lord (the Gospel Day; from the Day of Pentecost to the end of time) is spoken of 20 times in this book.

**HAGGAI:** this prophet is believed to have been born in Babylonian captivity. He returned with many other Jews to Jerusalem. The rebuilding of the temple had ceased (1:2-4). The people made excuses (1:2), but truly they were more concerned with rebuilding their own houses. Haggai encouraged the people to put God first and finish rebuilding "the LORD's house."

**ZECHARIAH:** this prophet worked with Haggai to encourage the people to rebuild the temple. His name means "Jehovah remembers," and God had not forgotten His covenant with His people. The last six chapters speak of the coming Messiah. Haggai and Zechariah were often described together as "the prophets of God."

**MALACHI:** the last Old Testament prophet's name means "messenger of Jehovah." During his ministry the people had only a form of worship (not from the heart). They also worshiped idols and



married idol worshipers (2:11). The priests led the people into wickedness (2:1-8). In this book we read how Malachi cried out against these sins, but we also read prophecies of the coming of John the Baptist (called Elijah; 4:5) and of Jesus (4:1-3).

**The Greatest Prophet**

Although the prophets told of the coming Messiah, they did not fully understand when or how this would happen (1 Peter 1:10-12). Moses told of "a Prophet" who would speak God's words (Deuteronomy 18:15-18). Peter told us that this was Jesus (Acts 3:20-22). Before Jesus came, God spoke through His prophets, but now "God . . . Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2). He is the greatest Prophet of all!



1. Israel's enemies the Edomites were descendants of what man?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Which nation enslaved the people of Israel, sometimes referred to as Ephraim (2 Kings 17:5-7)? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which nation enslaved the people of Judah (2 Kings 25:21)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What were the 400 years between Malachi and John the Baptist called? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Which two prophets had a message for Nineveh? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which two prophets worked together to encourage the people to rebuild the temple, putting God first?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. The name *Joel* means "Yahweh is God." What is another word for Yahweh? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What does "the day of the Lord" refer to and when did it begin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Malachi 4:5 says, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD." Matthew 11:14 says, ". . . this is Elias, which was for to come." Who is the man both of these Scriptures are talking about? \_\_\_\_\_

# Who Am I?

My book is a series of questions and answers to and from God. \_\_\_\_\_

I told of a day when God's Spirit would be poured out on all men. \_\_\_\_\_

I was a shepherd who carried the burdens of the people. \_\_\_\_\_

I worked with Haggai to encourage the people to rebuild the temple. \_\_\_\_\_

My book speaks of the day of the Lord 20 times. \_\_\_\_\_

I was the last prophet of God in the Old Testament. \_\_\_\_\_

I prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. \_\_\_\_\_

I spoke to people who were rebuilding their houses instead of God's house. \_\_\_\_\_

My name means "a dove." I was sent to Nineveh. \_\_\_\_\_

I warned the Edomites of coming judgment. \_\_\_\_\_

My wife was unfaithful, and I bought her back from slavery. \_\_\_\_\_

My message of judgment against Nineveh brought comfort to the people of Judah. \_\_\_\_\_

Hosea	Nahum
Jonah	Micah
Zephaniah	Haggai
Obadiah	Habakkuk
Amos	Zechariah
Malachi	Joel

