



Minor Prophets

Lesson 1

During the reign of David, the Kingdom of Israel had conquered many of the nations around them and grew into a strong nation following the Lord. After David's death, his son Solomon became king, and Israel became wealthy and famous among the nations of the world. This was in response to Solomon's prayer that God would give him wisdom to lead the people.

"Thy servant is in the midst of Thy people which Thou hast chosen, a great people who cannot be numbered or counted for multitude. So give Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Thine?"
... "And God said to him, 'Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you.
... And if you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days.'" 1 Kings 3:8-9, 11, 14

But after many years of prosperity, Solomon's heart began to grow proud. He married many foreign wives and began to worship the foreign gods they brought into his household. Soon they had infiltrated the whole nation, and Israel fell into severe idolatry. When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam took his place. Under his foolish leadership, the Kingdom was split in two.

The ten tribes of the north came under the

leadership of Jeroboam while only two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, remained under the leadership of Rehoboam. This began a cycle of war and conflict between these two kingdoms and the nations around them that would last many years. As the nations spiraled downward into more idolatry and political unrest, they experienced many different kings that would rule over them. Almost every king was an idol worshiper. In fact, every king of the Northern Kingdom was evil, but several of the kings of the Southern Kingdom followed the Lord and worked to bring the nation and its people back to God. When they followed the Lord the nation prospered, but when they disobeyed great problems arose just as God had promised.

It was during this time that God raised up "prophets" who would be His mouthpieces. The distinction between Major prophet (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) and Minor prophet (the 12 in this study) refers only to the length of the message not to its importance. They received their message directly from God. The message usually warned the people of God's certain judgment if they continued to reject Him and serve false gods. Catastrophe would come if they failed to listen to God's voice through these prophets.

The first part of God's judgment came through the nation of Assyria. In 722 B.C. the northern kingdom was conquered and taken into captivity in Assyria. The prophets of the southern kingdom begged and pleaded with the people to learn from the destruction of their sister Israel and repent. Though many of the good kings worked to bring

revival and restoration of their kingdom to God, the many corrupt kings, evil influences of the surrounding nations, and the hardness of the hearts of the people plunged them deeper into idolatry. In 586 BC the Babylonians came and destroyed Jerusalem and carried the Jews away to Babylon. God continued to send prophets with a message of hope to encourage the Hebrews that their captivity would only last 70 years.

But the prophets did not give a message just for Israel in that time of history. Their message would also carry a future hope for the generations to come. They foretold that God would send a Messiah who would free all people from the captivity of spiritual powers of darkness.

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. Therefore, He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel. And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth. And this One will be our peace.” Micah 5:2-5

Introduction to the Prophets

Definition:

The responsibilities of the prophet, and thus the definition, are best clarified by the varied activities of the prophets in both the Old and New Testaments. Though the position is identified by several terms (man of God, seer), the word “prophet” in its basic form referred to one who God used to be a mouthpiece to pass on a message. But the stress of the word refers more to “one who speaks for or on behalf of” not just “one who speaks before.” Though much of a prophet’s task was to inform of coming judgment, the more significant content was of the nature and will of God within the message. The prophet revealed God as Truth and Providence, the One who created, sustains, and guides human destiny.

Authors:

The books of the minor prophets are named after their authors. Very little is known about many of them, and most of what is known comes from the books themselves. They came from all walks of life with differing socioeconomic backgrounds. Each of them received a message from God that applied to current events within the history of the nation of Israel. Their messages, though of divine origin, were practical and specific to serious spiritual, moral, cultural, political, and personal issues of their time. God used different modes of communicating with the prophets themselves as well as to the recipients. Dreams, visions, imagery, parables, word pictures, allegory, and symbolic object lessons were common tools of the prophet. These were used to stress the message of the prophet which involved three basic points: rebuking them for their sin, a call to repentance, and encouragement of God’s faithfulness to His covenant promise in restoration of the nation.

Dates:

Though dating of the minor prophets is difficult and inconclusive, most are generally dated by the kings that were reigning during their time of activity. Several of the minor prophets were contemporaries but spoke to different audiences and their subject matter varied. Many also served simultaneously to the major prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. In this study we will follow the chronology suggested by Barnes Bible Charts which is included in the material.

Prophets of Israel & Judah - Part 1

PROPHETS	UNITED KINGDOM	KINGS OF ISRAEL	KINGS OF JUDAH	FOREIGN KINGS
SAMUEL	• Saul			<i>“And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him.” 1 Kings 22:7</i>
NATHAN	• David			
GAD	• David			
AHIJAH	• Solomon	• Jereboam I		
IDDO	• Solomon	• Rehoboam • Abijah		
SHEMAIAH		• Rehoboam		
AZARIAH			• Asa	
HANANI			• Asa	
JEHU			• Jehoshaphat	
JAHAZIEL		• Ahab • Ahaziah • Jehoram		
MICAHIAH		• Ahab		
ELIEZER			• Jehoshaphat	
ELIJAH		• Ahab • Ahaziah • Jehoram		
ZECHARIAH			• Joash	
ELISHA		• Ahaziah • Jehoram • Jehu • Jehoahaz • Jehoash		
ISAIAH		• Pekah • Hoshea	• Uzzah • Jotham • Ahaz • Hezekiah • Manesseh	

Barnes' Bible Charts

Prayer requests:

Group time notes:
