

The Books of the Minor Prophets

(God's True Story)

Introduction

[Teacher, review what we have learned so far about the Bible.] Last week we learned about the five books called the Major Prophets. Today we will learn about the 12 books called the Minor Prophets.

Opening Prayer

Father, we're so glad that You have not kept Your will for our lives a secret. You have seen to it that everything we need to know about life was written down in the pages of the Bible, Your word. We pray that You would make the eyes of our heart and our spiritual ears tuned in to You this morning, so that we won't miss anything You want to say to us. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse:

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. (Psalm 119:9)

Lesson

The books of the Minor Prophets are just as important as the ones in the Major Prophets, but each book is shorter—that is why they are called Minor. Let's read the names of the Minor Prophets from our Table of Contents together.

Most of these prophets preached during the times of the kings of Israel whose stories are told in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. [Teacher, use a Bible Book poster to point out these books.]

[Teacher, explain what the captivity is about...]

After the children of Israel came back from Egypt and Joshua helped them conquer the land, they had Judges who ruled over them for about 300 years. Then, they begged God for a king.

They were ruled by kings for many years. The first king was Saul, the second king was David. Then Solomon ruled the people. Some of the kings followed after the ways of God, like David. But, some of the kings were bad, like King Ahab and his wicked wife, Jezebel.

The books of First and Second Kings, and First and Second Chronicles are record books, like diaries, that tell us the stories of what these kings did and what they were like.

The last chapter of 2 Chronicles tells the story of Zedekiah, the last of the kings. He was so unfaithful to God that He finally had to punish the people.

2 Chronicles 36:11-15 [Teacher, read...]

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. (12) But Zedekiah did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and he refused to humble himself when the prophet Jeremiah spoke to him directly from the LORD. (13) He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, even though he had taken an oath of loyalty in God's name. Zedekiah was a hard and stubborn man, refusing to turn to the LORD, the God of Israel. (14) Likewise, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful. They followed all the pagan practices of the surrounding nations, desecrating the Temple of the LORD that had been consecrated in Jerusalem. (15) The LORD, the God of their ancestors, repeatedly sent his prophets to warn them, for he had compassion on his people and his Temple.

Again, and again over the years God sent prophets to the various kings to warn them to follow His ways. But they made fun of the prophets.

2 Chronicles 36:16

But the people mocked these messengers of God and despised their words. They scoffed at the prophets until the LORD's anger could no longer be restrained and nothing could be done.

God could not stand the people's unfaithfulness any longer and He brought the Babylonians against the children of Israel to punish them. Let's read how they destroyed Jerusalem and took the people captive.

2 Chronicles 36:18-20

The king took home to Babylon all the articles, large and small, used in the Temple of God, and the treasures from both the LORD's Temple and from the palace of the king and his officials. (19) Then his army burned the Temple of God, tore down the walls of Jerusalem, burned all the palaces, and completely destroyed everything of value. (20) The few who survived were taken as exiles to Babylon, and they became servants to the king and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power.

God allowed the Babylonians to punish the people for not being faithful to Him. They looted the Temple of all the gold and silver things, and then they burned the place down and led the people off 900 miles to present day Iraq where they became slaves to King Nebuchadnezzar until the kingdom of Persia conquered Babylon.]

Each of the twelve books of the Minor Prophets tells part of God's story. Some of the men that wrote these books lived *before* the children of Israel were sent off to captivity, some lived *during* the time of the captivity, and some lived *after* the time of captivity.

Pre-Exilic Books

Before the captivity, God sent messenger after messenger to warn the people. He told them that He must punish them for all their sins. But He also assured them that if they were sorry, confessed their sins, and repented from their wicked ways (that is, stopped sinning and started living righteously), that He would pour out His blessing upon them again.

Hosea

Hosea preached at a time when all seemed to be going well for Israel, but there was much hidden sin.

Hosea 11:7

For my people are determined to desert me. They call me the Most High, but they don't truly honor me.

Yet Hosea told them of God's steadfast love in spite of their unfaithfulness.

Hosea 14:1-4

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for your sins have brought you down. (2) Bring your confessions, and return to the LORD. Say to him, "Forgive all our sins and graciously receive us, so that we may offer you our praises. (3) Assyria cannot save us, nor can our warhorses. Never again will we say to the idols we have made, "You are our gods." No, in you alone do the orphans find mercy." (4) The LORD says, "Then I will heal you of your faithlessness; my love will know no bounds, for my anger will be gone forever.

God's arms were open wide if they would just come back to Him. And His arms are always open for you and me, too.

Joel

Joel reminded the people that God is always willing to forgive if we will turn our hearts back to Him.

Joel 2:12-13

That is why the LORD says, "Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. (13) Don't tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead." Return to the LORD your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He is eager to relent and not punish.

This was a message of hope – in spite of the judgment of God, He will restore His people and dwell with them.

Amos

Amos was a farmer, but he knew God's word. God saw this farmer's tender heart and asked him to take a message to the king of Israel.

Amos went boldly and listed the sins that God was going to judge. He challenged the people to confess their sins to God and repent. But the

people ignored his preaching. So, Amos warned the people that they must prepare to meet God.

Amos 4:12

"Therefore, I will bring upon you all the disasters I have announced. Prepare to meet your God in judgment, you people of Israel!"

Someday we will all have to stand before God and give an account for all that we have said and done; we need to be ready to meet God!

If you confess your sins and repent of them, God will not withhold His love from you.

Obadiah

God asked Obadiah to give a very powerful message to the country of Edom. The Edomites had hated Israel and actually celebrated when they saw the Israelites suffering hardships. But Obadiah gives them God's sentence of destruction.

Obadiah 1:15-16

"The day is near when I, the LORD, will judge all godless nations! As you have done to Israel, so it will be done to you. All your evil deeds will fall back on your own heads. (16) Just as you swallowed up my people on my holy mountain, so you and the surrounding nations will swallow the punishment I pour out on you. Yes, all you nations will drink and stagger and disappear from history.

Obadiah's message still applies to us today. Never be so proud that you laugh when trouble comes to others. Remember that pride can lead you to a fall.

Jonah

Jonah is the only prophet God used who did not want to deliver God's message. [Teacher, briefly summarize the story of Jonah.] We don't know why, but Jonah hated the people of Nineveh. They were known for the cruel ways they tortured their captives. Jonah wanted God to

destroy them. He was afraid that God would be merciful and forgive them if they repented of their sins. So, when God asked Jonah to go to Nineveh, he ran the other way.

The message of Jonah is not about Jonah running from God, but about God's mercy on sinners. The lesson for us is that God has concern for the whole world; His gracious offer of salvation extends to all who repent and turn to Him.

Isn't it wonderful that God is merciful? There is no sin that God will not forgive! The Lord Jesus died for the sins of the whole world and offers salvation to everyone. God loves each of us and will forgive us if we repent.

Exilic Books

While they were in captivity, God continued to speak to His people through the prophets. He wanted them to know why they were being punished and to remind them that if they were sorry, confessed their sins, and repented from their wicked ways (that is, stopped sinning), that He would pour out His blessing upon them again.

Micah

Micah was a simple country preacher who loved to work with the common people. He had great compassion for people's problems. Micah reminded the people to live righteously before God.

Micah 6:8

No, O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

Nahum

Nahum lived a 100 years after Jonah and God used him to preach a message of judgment against Nineveh, too.

Nahum 1:9

Why are you scheming against the LORD? He will destroy you with one blow; he won't need to strike twice!

This time the people of Nineveh did not repent and Nahum's prophecies came true. Shortly after this warning Nineveh was completely destroyed. God does punish people that do not turn away from their sins.

Habakkuk

Habakkuk was a trained preacher who lived near Jerusalem. He lived at the time that Israel was facing an invasion by the Babylonians.

Habakkuk 1:6-7

I am raising up the Babylonians, a cruel and violent people. They will march across the world and conquer other lands. (7) They are notorious for their cruelty and do whatever they like.

Habakkuk couldn't believe that God would raise up the Babylonians to punish the children of Israel. He cries out to God...

Habakkuk 1:12

O LORD my God, my Holy One, you who are eternal—surely you do not plan to wipe us out? O LORD, our Rock, you have sent these Babylonians to correct us, to punish us for our many sins.

God tells Habakkuk that He will not allow evil to continue; it has to be punished. But, He also reassures the people if they turn from their sins in faith, that God will deliver them.

Habakkuk 2:4

"Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked. But the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God."

What is important is that each of us turns to Him in faith. When you do that, your life will be filled with joy, no matter what circumstances you find yourself in.

Zephaniah

For more than fifty years the nation had lived wickedly under kings. The people had become lazy and unconcerned about God. They had disobeyed God and relied on themselves.

Zephaniah 3:1-2

What sorrow awaits rebellious, polluted Jerusalem, the city of violence and crime! (2) No one can tell it anything; it refuses all correction. It does not trust in the LORD or draw near to its God.

Zephaniah's message of hope to the people was that after the exile, if the people turned back to God, He would rescue them. God was longing to save them.

Zephaniah 3:17

For the LORD your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs."

Soon after Zephaniah's preaching, there was a national revival. God truly does keep His word.

Post-Exilic Books

After the punishment was completed, God allowed the people to go back to Promised Land, the land of Israel.

Haggai

Haggai preached during an exciting time. He was the first prophet to speak to the people after they returned from captivity in Babylon.

Happy to be back in their own land, the Israelites began right away to rebuild God's house and to worship Him with their whole hearts.

Then God used Haggai to share some special promises of wonderful things that He will do for Israel in the future.

Haggai 2:9

The future glory of this Temple will be greater than its past glory, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. And in this place I will bring peace. I, the LORD of Heaven's Armies, have spoken!"

Zechariah

Zechariah challenged the people to turn from their sins of selfishness and love of things and accept the coming Savior. Zechariah predicted many details concerning the coming Messiah, Jesus, God's promised Savior. He prophesied that He would enter Jerusalem as a king just before His death.

Zechariah 9:9

Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—riding on a donkey's colt.

And he described Jesus' death on the cross.

Zechariah 12:10

"Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David and on the people of Jerusalem. They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him as for an only son. They will grieve bitterly for him as for a firstborn son who has died.

Zechariah's message ends with God's promise that the Messiah will return a second time to judge His enemies and to deliver His people forever (chapter 14).

It is sad to know that Zechariah was killed by a mob of angry people who rejected his message from God. They did not want to believe that

it was true. But during His life on earth the Lord Jesus fulfilled every prophecy about the first coming of the Messiah. And it is certain that He will fulfill all the predictions about the second coming as well! Isn't it exciting to know that we can trust God's Word?

Malachi

Several generations passed after Zechariah and Haggai challenged the people to rebuild the Temple and return to God. They did listen for a time, but gradually they drifted away from God. They stopped worshiping at God's Temple and no longer took care of it. Eventually God sent Ezra and Nehemiah to stir the people to turn back to Him. Then there was a revival; the people truly repented and worshiped God with sincere hearts. They repaired the Temple and built strong walls around Jerusalem. But the revival lasted only a few years. Oh, the Jews continued to go through the motions of worship. But they did not mean it in their hearts. It was at this time in history, about a hundred years after God brought the Jews back to their land from Babylon, that Malachi preached.

Malachi saw the sins of his people, and God used him to rebuke Israel. His message was simple: Worship God with pure hearts and follow His laws completely.

Malachi 2:2

Listen to me and make up your minds to honor my name," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, "or I will bring a terrible curse against you. I will curse even the blessings you receive. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you have not taken my warning to heart.

God wants you to serve Him with a pure heart, too. Through Malachi, God promises that if you obey Him, He will bless you in ways far greater than you can imagine.

Malachi 3:10

Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the

windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!

This brings us to the close of our brief study of the Old Testament. Let's thank God for His Word right now.

Closing Prayer

Father, we want to thank You for all the promises you give us in Your word. Thank You for all those that have already come true: You sent Jesus to be born to a virgin, just as You said you would. Then Jesus died and rose again, just as You predicted. Thank You also for all Your promises that will come true in the future, too. We especially look forward to Jesus' return. You are a good and gracious God to have all of your prophecies written down in Your book, the Bible, so that we may come to know and love You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Books of the Old Testament Song

(To the tune of "Did You Ever See a Lassie?")

Let us sing the books of Moses, of Moses, of Moses,

Let us sing the books of Moses, for he wrote the law.

*First, **Genesis**; second, **Exodus**; third, **Leviticus**; fourth, **Numbers**;*

*And the fifth is **Deuteronomy**, the last of them all.*

Let us sing the books of history, of history, of history,

Let us sing the books of history, which tell of the Jews.

*There's **Joshua**, and **Judges**, and the story of **Ruth**.*

*First and second **Samuel**; and two books of **Kings**;*

*There's two books of **Chronicles**, which give us the records;*

*Then **Ezra**; **Nehemiah**; and **Esther**, the Queen.*

Let us sing the books of poetry, of poetry, of poetry,

Let us sing the books of poetry, the songs of the Jews.

***Job** the patient, **Psalms** of David, and **Proverbs** of wise men;*

*And then, **Ecclesiastes**, and **Solomon's Song**.*

Let us sing the Major Prophets, Major Prophets, Major Prophets,

Let us sing the Major Prophets, the greatest of all.

***Isaiah**, **Jeremiah**, who wrote **Lamentations**;*

***Ezekiel** and **Daniel**, who were true to their God.*

Let us sing the Minor Prophets, Minor Prophets, Minor Prophets,

Let us sing the Minor Prophets, there are twelve of them all:

***Hosea**, **Joel**, **Amos**, **Obadiah**, **Jonah**, **Micah**, **Nahum**, **Habakkuk**,*

***Zephaniah**, **Haggai**, **Zechariah**, **Malachi**.*

Game Center

God's Word Game

In order to find out what God's Word says, we need to know how to find our way around in God's Word!

Write the name of each book of the Bible (or a section of the Bible) on a separate index card. Mix up the cards and divide evenly between

the players. Each player places his or her stack face down in front of him- or herself. Then, at the same time, each player turns the top card from his or her stack face up and says the Bible book name aloud. Players compare face-up cards. Player who played the Bible book card that come latest in the Bible, collects face-up cards and add them to the bottom of his or her stack. (For example, if two people are playing and one player played the card for the book of Genesis and the other player played the card for the book of Luke, the latter player would collect both cards.) Repeat play until one player has all of the cards.

Review Questions:

1. What is a prophet? (A messenger)
2. Why are the books of the Minor Prophets called "minor"? Are they less important than the Major Prophets? (They are shorter)
3. How many books make up the Minor Prophets of the Old Testament? (12)
4. The prophet Haggai comes on the scene encourage people to finish an uncompleted project. What was it he wanted the people to do? (Finish rebuilding the Temple.)
5. Who was the farmer who warned the people of his day about their sin? (Amos)
6. Which prophet is said to have prophesied the place where Jesus would be born? (Micah)
7. Why did the great fish swallow Jonah? (Jonah refused to go to Nineveh as God commanded.)
8. Who prophesied the ultimate destruction of Nineveh? (Nahum)
9. Which prophet complained to God about using wicked nations to punish the children of Israel? (Habakkuk)
10. Which of Jesus' disciples quoted the Prophet Joel in the second chapter of Acts on the day of Pentecost? (Peter)
11. Obadiah's prophecy was to what nation that was making fun of the children of Israel? (Edom)
12. In what section of the Bible can you find information about the Ten Commandments? (The Law)
13. How many books are in the Bible? (66)
14. How many men wrote the 66 books of the Bible? (40)
15. Over how many years did it take to write the Bible? (1,600)
16. Whose ideas are written in the Bible and how did the authors get them? (The thoughts and ideas are God's. The men were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write them down.)
17. Why can you trust that what is written in the Bible is true? (God inspired it and He never changes His mind.)
18. What is the main theme of the Bible? (God's message of salvation; His plan of redemption.)
19. What sort of information is in the two books of Kings and the two books of Chronicles? (The records or journals of the time of the kings.)
20. What sort of information is in the history books? (The history of God's Chosen People, the Israelites.)
21. What is the main purpose of the book of Psalms? (It helps us express our feelings to God.)

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