

Introduction

1) **What was a prophet?**

- a) When we think of a prophet we often consider him as one who foretold the future, and this is right, but only to a certain extent. He also told the condition of the people of God or the nations, and as such was God's spokesman just as Moses was to Aaron (Ex. 4:16; 7:1). God described such men as "holy men of God" who were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:21). He was a man given a message from God and had to say it as God commanded (Jer. 20:7-9) without deviation, being the "messenger of God" (Isa. 42:19), being His watchman (Ezek. 3:17).
- b) The names a prophet was designated by:
 - i) They were known as "Seers" (1 Sam. 9:9; 2 Chron. 29:30; Amos 7:12), some were called a "servant of God" (1 Kgs. 18:36), or the "man of God" (1 Sam. 9:6; 1 Kgs. 17:18).

2) **The importance of the minor prophets**

- a) The minor prophets are apparently among the least read books of the scriptures, which results in a loss to the saints of some of the manifestations of divine judgment and grace. While justification is on the same basis today as in the Old Testament, by faith alone (Rom. 4:2-4), yet we are not under law but under grace. Having said that, it does not mean the Old Testament has no value for us for Paul informs his readers it was:
 - i) "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Rom. 15:4)
 - ii) "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." (1 Cor. 10:11)
 - iii) "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17)

The Activity of The Prophets

Not all the prophets wrote books for there were in the kingdom of Israel and Judah who were oral and those who wrote, and those who did both.

- a) The following is a list of them.
 - i) Oral Prophets in Judah:
 - (a) Shemaiah (1 Kgs. 12:22-24; 2 Chron. 11:2)
 - (b) Iddo (2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22)
 - (c) Oded (2 Chron. 15:1, 8); (There were two Oded's)
 - (d) Azariah (2 Chron. 15:1-8)
 - (e) Hanani (2 Chron. 16:7-10)
 - (f) Eliezer (2 Chron. 20:35-37)
 - (g) Zechariah (2 Chron. 26:3-5)
 - ii) Oral and literary prophets who wrote and spoke of the political and spiritual situation of Israel, and at times the nations such as:
 - (a) Micah (Mic. 1:1-7:20)
 - (b) Habakkuk (Hab. 1:1-2:20)
 - (c) Haggai (Hag. 1-2:23)
 - iii) Oral Prophets in Israel:
 - (a) Ahijah (1 Kgs. 11:29-39; 12:15; 14:2-18; 15:29; 2 Chron. 9:29; 10:15)
 - (b) Elijah (1 Kgs. chs. 17-19; 21:17-29; 2 Chron. 21:12-15)
 - (c) Micaiah (1 Kgs. 22:8-28; 2 Chron. 18:6-27)
 - (d) Elisha (1 Kgs. 19:15-21; 2 Kgs. 2-9:1; 13:15-21)

Books of The Bible Introduction to The Minor Prophets

- (e) Jonah (2 Kgs. 14:23-27)
- (f) Oded (2 Chron. 28:9)

- d) Literary Prophets in Israel:
 - i) Amos (Amos 1:1)
 - ii) Hosea (Hos. 1:1)

- e) To Both Kingdoms
 - i) Jehu (1 Kgs. 16:1-4, 7; 2 Chron. 19:1-3; 20:34)

- 3) A study of these books, or even a careful reading, will spiritually enrich as they observe in the ancients the principles of God's holiness, judgment, foreknowledge, righteousness, justice and mercy.

- 4) One of the questions throughout the ages has been: "Why are they called the 'Minor' Prophets?", and while a number of suggestions have been made, they do fall short.
 - a) For instance, it has been said that they are minor because of their smaller size, in which case an individual will point to Isaiah, or Ezekiel, or Jeremiah, with their 66, 48, and 52 chapters respectively and compare them to Obadiah, Jonah, and Haggai with their 1, 4, and 2 chapters. However, they ignore the fact that Daniel, a major prophet, has twelve chapters, and Hosea and Zechariah have fourteen chapters, and they are among the minor prophets. Size has nothing to do with it.

 - b) Another suggestion is that the major prophets end with a happy note, like the major keys of music, whereas the minor prophets are like the minor notes of music. All one has to do is consider the endings of the minor prophets and the most are far from being downcast endings. For instance, read the last chapter of Hosea where God says: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely" (Hos. 14:4); "Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation" (Joel. 3:20); "I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them" (Amos 9:15). Since nearly all the minor prophets end with a positive tone it is not tone that has them referred to as minor.

 - c) It seems to me that there are at least two other possibilities:
 - i) The description goes back to how the books were arranged in the ancient Jewish scriptures. The "major prophets" all stood as single books, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., whereas the twelve "minor prophets" were united as one book.
 - ii) The major prophets furnish the broad strokes of Messianic prophecy and God's dealings with Israel and the nations, whereas the minor prophets expand some of the prophecies in more detail.

Duration

- 1) These twelve books cover a period of 470 years from approximately 830-400 B.C. They prophesied concerning the Northern Kingdom (Israel), Southern Kingdom (Judah), and during and after the exile. Since we do not know when Obadiah, Joel, Habakkuk, Nahum, Malachi, and Jonah prophesied, their durations or under which monarch they ministered, it is foolish to conjecture.

- 2) The following table gives some of the major observations about them.

Books of The Bible
Introduction to The Minor Prophets

Prophet	Date Approx.	To Whom	References
Hosea	755-715	Pre-exile Israel to Assyria, during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Jeroboam the son of Joash (ch. 1:1)	Hos. 1:1-2; Rom. 9:25 translated Osee.
Joel	Unknown	Pre-exile Judah to Assyria from internal evidences	Joel 1:1; Acts 2:16
Amos	760-715	Pre-exile Israel during the reigns of Uzziah, Jeroboam the son of Joash (ch. 1:1)	Amos 1:1; 7:8, 10, 11, 12, 14; 8:2
Obadiah	Unknown	Pre-exile Edom, The Babylonian empire was ruling. It is unknown who was reigning.	Obad.1:1; It has been suggested he was the Obadiah who hid one hundred of the prophets of the Lord (1 Kgs. 18:3-16); others think it was the man sent by Jehoshaphat to teach the people (2 Chron. 17:7). However, nothing can be given as a solid foundation for such.
Jonah (Jonas)	Unknown	Pre exile Assyria	Jon. 1:1; (17 occs. in the book) 2 Kgs. 14:25; Matt. 12:39-41; 16:4; Lk. 11:29-32)
Micah	735-690	Pre-exile Judah, to Assyria He prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah (ch. 1:1)	Mic. 1:1; Jer. 26:18
Nahum	Unknown	Pre-exile Assyria It is unknown who was reigning	Nah. 1:1
Habakkuk	Unknown	Pre-exile Judah. To Babylon. It is unknown who was reigning	Hab. 1:1; 3:1
Zephaniah	625-628	Post exile Judah, to Assyria, He prophesied during the reigns of Josiah (ch. 1:1)	Zeph. 1:1; Zech. 6:10, 14
Haggai	520	Post exile Jews who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon	Hag. 1:1, 3, 12, 13; 2:1, 10, 13, 14, 20; Ezra 5:1; 6:14
Zechariah	515-480	Post exile Jews who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon	Zech. 1:1, 7; 7:1, 8
Malachi	Unknown	Understood to be to the Jews who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon	Mal. 1:1

What Was The Characteristics of The Days of The Prophets?

In reading the backgrounds and the books themselves it is evident God raised these men up in very dark days. Insolent rebellion and apostasy characterized the days.

Books of The Bible
Introduction to The Minor Prophets

The Relation of The Prophets to The United and Southern Kingdoms

The prophets in italics are non literary prophets, that is, they wrote nothing.

United Kingdom	King	Prophet
	Saul (1 Sam. 11:15)	<i>Samuel (1 Sam. 3:20)</i>
	David (2 Sam. 2:4)	<i>Nathan (2 Sam. 7:2)</i> <i>Gad (1 Sam. 22:5)</i>
	Solomon (1 Kgs. 1:43)	<i>Ahijah (1 Kgs. 11:29)</i>

Judah-Southern Kingdom	King/ queen	Prophets
	Rehoboam (1 Kgs. 12:27)	Shemaiah (2 Chron. 12:5)
	Abijam (1 Kgs. 15:1)	
	Asa (1 Kgs. 15:9)	Azariah (2 Chron. 15); Hanani (2 Chron. 16)
	Jehoshaphat (1 Kgs. 22:2)	
	Jehoram (1 Kgs. 22:50)	
	Ahaziah (2 Kgs. 8:25)	Possibly Obadiah (Obad. 1:1)
	Athaliah (2 Kgs. 11:3)	
	Joash /Jehoash (2 Kgs. 11:2, 21)	Possibly Joel (Acts 2:16)
	Amaziah (2 Kgs. 12:21)	
	Azariah (Uzziah) (2 Kgs. 15:1)	Isaiah (2 Kgs. 19:2)
	Jotham (2 Kgs. 15:7)	
	Ahaz (2 Kgs. 15:38)	
	Hezekiah (2 Kgs. 16:20)	
	Manasseh (2 Kgs. 20:21)	Nahum (Nah. 1:1)
	Amon (2 Kgs. 21:18)	Zephaniah (Zeph. 1:1-2)
	Josiah (2 Kgs. 21:24)	Habakkuk (Hab. 1-2)
	Jehoahaz (2 Kgs. 23:30)	<i>Huldah (2 Kgs. 22:14; 2 Chron. 34:22)</i>

Books of The Bible
Introduction to The Minor Prophets

	Jehoiakim (2 Kgs. 23:34)	Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1-3)
	Jehoiachin (2 Kgs. 24:6)	
	Zedekiah (2 Kgs. 24:17)	

The Relationships of The Prophets to The Northern Kingdom

Israel Northern Kingdom	King/ Queen	Prophet
	Jeroboam (1 Kgs. 12:20)	<i>Ahijah (1 Kgs. 11:29, 30)</i>
	Nadab (1 Kgs. 14:20)	
	Baasha (1 Kgs. 15:33)	<i>Jehu (1 Kgs. 16:1-4)</i>
	Elah (1 Kgs. 16:6)	
	Zimra (1 Kgs. 16:10-11)	
	Omri (1 Kgs. 16:16, 21)	
	Ahab (1 Kgs. 16:28)	<i>Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:1, 13)</i>
	Ahaziah (1 Kgs. 22:40)	<i>Micaiah (1 Kgs. 22:8-28)</i>
	Jehoram (2 Kgs. 3:1)	
	Jehu (2 Kgs. 9:13)	
	Jehoahaz (2 Kgs. 10:35)	<i>Elisha (1 Kgs. 19:15-21)</i>
	Joash (2 Kgs. 13:1)	Possibly Jonah (2 Kgs. 14:23-27); Amos 1:1
	Jeroboam 2 (Amos 1:1)	Hosea (Hos. 1:1)
	Zechariah (2 Kgs. 15:8)	
	Shallum (2 Kgs. 15:10)	
	Menahem (2 Kgs. 15:14)	
	Pekahiah (2 Kgs. 15:22)	
	Hoshea (2 Kgs. 15:30)	

Books of The Bible
Introduction to The Minor Prophets

General Themes of The Prophets

Some of the major themes the prophets wrote and spoke about were:

- a) The holiness of God
- b) The sovereignty of God
- c) The immutability of God's word
- d) The forgiving grace and mercy of God

As we muse on these books may the Holy Spirit help us to see lovely foreshadows of the Lord and wonders of God Himself.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia