

# UNDERSTANDING THE MINOR PROPHETS

By Frank Nelte

Understanding prophecy more fully is always interesting. Here are some pointers without going into all the details. See what you think. Here goes:

1) Revelation gives us the most complete framework for end-time prophecies. Other end-time prophecies all fit into this framework in some way ...the 7 Seals, 7 Trumpets and 7 Plagues followed by the millennium.

2) The 12 Minor Prophets all comprise ONE book in the inspired canon. That's how God inspired it...so you would expect them all to tie together in some way. This they do indeed.

3) The 12 books fall into 3 time-periods:

books 1-7 = Hosea - Nahum = Assyrian Period;  
books 8-9 = Habakkuk - Zephaniah = Babylonian Period;  
books 10-12 = Haggai - Malachi = Restoration Period.

4) Each of these 12 books offers us 2 CLUES regarding its particular subject matter:

A) the meaning of the name of the Prophet;  
B) the S.P.S. statement in the first 4 verses of each book.

5) The overall story-flow in these 12 books is much easier to follow when presented in the form of a chart ... which is what I've done on the accompanying chart, which I've used in sermons around the country over the years.

Across the top we picture the sequence of events based on the book of Revelation. It is NOT a time scale, but simply a sequence of events. Down the left-hand side we list all 12 minor prophets, grouped into the 3 distinct time periods. In this way we can form a grid. Then we study each book and mark an "X" in the squares representing the events that are the main theme of that book. Some books may require several "X"s (i.e. they discuss several of the events outlined in Revelation).

Some books may be difficult to place into the framework of Revelation. In that case it may prove helpful to consider how the books before it and after it tie in, perhaps giving some additional clues this way.

6) For all 12 let's now briefly consider the meaning of the prophet's name and the purpose statement found right in the opening verses of each book and then briefly summarize each message.

A) HOSEA means : SALVATION;  
S.P.S. = 1:2,4

The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, [departing] from the LORD. (Hosea 1:2)

This is the "beginning" or opening part of this greater book (of 12 prophets) and it pictures a situation where the land has sinned and "departed from the Eternal".

And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little [while], and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. (Hosea 1:4)

God is saying: I WILL CAUSE ISRAEL TO GO INTO THE TRIBULATION! So for Hosea we can put an "X" under the Great Tribulation.

This book discusses an overview of God's plan of salvation, starting with Israel in captivity. 3 key words are mentioned, 2 of which have their meanings reversed. The other word already has two different meanings. These words are:

POSITIVE MEANINGS:	NEGATIVE MEANINGS:
=====	=====
Jezreel (I will sow)	Jezreel (I will scatter)
Ruhamah (Obtaining mercy)	Lo-Ruhamah (Not obtaining mercy)
Ammi (My People)	Lo-Ammi (Not my People).

When a farmer sowed his seeds, he would do so by "scattering" the seeds over the land, thus giving both meanings.

1:4 = call his name Jezreel because I will scatter Israel;

1:6 = call her Lo-Ruhamah because I will not have mercy and Israel will go into the Tribulation;

1:9 = call him Lo-Ammi for you are not my people any more;

1:11 = upon Christ's return this will all be reversed;  
1:11 = then God will sow (Jezreel) Israel again (see 2:22);  
2:1 = Israel will again become God's people;  
2:1 = Israel will again obtain mercy.

The rest of the book expands on these terms, though mainly on the first 3 (i.e. the Great Tribulation).

Thus the 1st book of the Assyrian Period starts off with the Great Tribulation, when Assyria will be at the height of its power, right? Now what would you expect the 7th book of the Assyrian Period to talk about ...?

B) NAHUM means : TO CONSOLE and TO AVENGE;  
S.P.S. = 1:1-2

- 1 The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.
- 2 God [is] jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and [is] furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth [wrath] for his enemies. (Nahum 1)

This book talks about the destruction of Assyria, which will happen in the 2nd Woe. So mark your "X" for Nahum under the 2nd Woe.

The last book of the Assyrian Period shows the total destruction of Assyria. You can read it as a description of the 2nd Woe. However, before that happens we have Jonah ...

C) JONAH means : DOVE;  
S.P.S. = 1:2

Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. (Jonah 1:2)

The timing of this book is shown in Jonah 3:4 ...

And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. (Jonah 3:4)

Revelation 9 shows the 1st Woe lasts for 5 months; after 3 months and 20 days Assyria will need to receive the warning of Jonah : "yet 40 days and you will be overthrown". Where historically Niniveh repented, the indications are that this time Assyria will not repent. So mark your "X" for Jonah at the end of the 1st

Woe.

Now let's examine book #9, the last book of the Babylonian Period.

D) ZEPHANIAH means : GOD HAS HIDDEN;  
S.P.S. = 1:2-3

- 2 I will utterly consume all [things] from off the land, saith the LORD.
- 3 I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD.  
(Zephaniah 1)

This is a discussion of the 3rd Woe. It is God's wrath that had been hidden. Thus the 9th book, the last book of the Babylonian Period, shows the utter destruction of this world's Babylonian system. Revelation 17-18 ties in here. Some key verses:

1:14-18 = 7th Trumpet, Day of Wrath = 7 last plagues;  
chpt. 2 = the 3rd Woe and its effects;  
3:8 = the 6th and 7th plagues;  
3:9-20 = the millennium and beyond.

So mark your "X" for Zephaniah under the 3rd Woe; i.e. under all 7 last plagues.

Can you see the pattern emerging ... start with the Tribulation, then end of 1st Woe, 2nd Woe and then 3rd Woe?

The last 3 books are the "Restoration Period" and they continue this progression. God restores in 3 steps, each pictured by a Holy Day. Thus Haggai is associated with the Feast of Trumpets, Zechariah with the Feast of Tabernacles and Malachi with the Last Great Day ... i.e. Christ's return, then the millennium and then the 100-year period and the lake of fire. THEN THE RESTORATION WILL BE COMPLETE! So Malachi concludes the Minor Prophets.

E) HAGGAI means : MY FEAST;  
S.P.S. = 1:2

Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.  
(Haggai 1:2)

People think it's too early for the millennium to start ... right after the discussion of the 3rd Woe. But "Haggai" tells us that God's Feasts reveal THE WAY God will restore the Earth.

All 3 Restoration books conclude with either a reference to or a description of a Holy Day.

1:1 = the year immediately after the fall of Babylon ... i.e. early into the millennium (?) ... What follows are 4 messages to 4 different groups of people:

1:1-11 = 1st message = to Zerubbabel and Joshua = BUILD GOD'S HOUSE!

1:12-15 = a good response;

2:1-9 = 2nd message = to Zerubbabel and Joshua and the people = REMEMBER THE FORMER GLORY AND BE STRONG!

2:10-19 = 3rd message = to the priests = THE PEOPLE ARE UNCLEAN BEFORE GOD (at beginning of millennium) AND THEREFORE NEED TO REPENT ... THIS REQUIRES TEACHING!

2:17-19 = consider the blessings that repentance & obedience bring with them

2:20-23 = 4th message = to Zerubbabel = THIS MESSAGE PICTURES THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS, THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST

"A signet" is someone who identified the true God, i.e. Christ will then point out to humanity who really was His true servant at the end-time. Who is this "Zerubbabel"? I don't know ... perhaps Mr. Armstrong?

Anyway, for Haggai make your "X" on the chart at THE BEGINNING OF THE MILLENNIUM!

F) ZECHARIAH means : GOD HAS REMEMBERED;

S.P.S. = 1:2-6

2 The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers.

3 Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.

4 Be ye not as your fathers ...

At the beginning of the millennium Christ says: look at your relatives who died because they refused to repent. Therefore you had better repent right now!

From 1:8 to 6:8 the prophet sees 8 consecutive visions all in one night. This is followed by a series of prophecies and the book ends with the Feast of Tabernacles.

What "God has remembered" is what mankind has gone through ... the subject of the 8 visions, and His plan of salvation for all mankind.

The 8 visions very briefly:

VISION 1 = 1:8-17 = imminence of the 1st Woe (verse 15 is a key);  
VISION 2 = 1:18-21 = the 2nd Woe ... (4 main nations to punish Europe?);  
VISION 3 = chpt. 2 = calling Israel out of captivity;  
VISION 4 = chpt. 3 = Joshua ... the ministry at the end-time?  
VISION 5 = chpt. 4 = Zerubbabel ... the Work and the 2 witnesses;  
{interesting that the 2 witnesses feature in this exact time  
context ... just before the 3rd Woe}  
VISION 6 = 5:1-4 = the curse = the 3rd Woe;  
VISION 7 = 5:5-11 = the punishment of Babylon;  
VISION 8 = 6:1-8 = the 4 chariots ...

{ I don't have an explanation for these; they are different from the "horses & riders" of Rev. 6; I would guess that they perhaps tie in with the 7 last plagues in some way ? }

The rest of chpt. 6 talks about Christ and those in the first resurrection ... which follows all these visions. In chapter 14 the book concludes with a discussion of the Feast of Tabernacles ... step #2 in God's restoration.

So for Zechariah mark your "X" under the whole millennium.

Now let's look at the 3rd and final step in God's restoration ...

G) MALACHI means : MY MESSENGER  
S.P.S. = 1:2

I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? [Was] not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, (Malachi 1:2)

This book completes the restoration of mankind having access to God and restoring the government of God over this Earth.

THIS BOOK IS ADDRESSED TO THOSE WHO DON'T SEE GOD'S LOVE FOR THEM ... i.e. it addresses those who end up in the lake of fire. It is called "My Messenger" because Jesus Christ, the Messenger, explains the successive steps that lead to the lake of fire.

This succession is shown in the form of 8 questions and answers, which explain WHY they end up in the lake of fire.

A brief overview:

QUESTION 1 = 1:2 = people who don't see God's love for them;  
QUESTION 2 = 1:6 = this leads to a lack of respect and despising;  
QUESTION 3 = 1:7 = this leads to polluted teachings and contempt;  
    { 1:8-2:13 = a long section on God's law }  
QUESTION 4 = 2:14 = this leads to immorality and treachery;  
QUESTION 5 = 2:17 = this leads to condoning evil (loving it!);  
QUESTION 6 = 3:7 = they obviously don't see the need to repent;  
QUESTION 7 = 3:8 = this leads to robbing God;  
QUESTION 8 = 3:13 = the last straw ... a totally rebellious attitude;

The questions people ask God make clear that they don't see their own guilt and wrongs!

4:1-3 = the only place this progression can end with is the lake of fire. The lake of fire represents the LAST PART of the Last Great day. Thereafter the restoration is complete.

So for Malachi mark your "X" under the 100-year period after the millennium.

Right, now we've looked at 7 of the 12 books. Can we see the story-flow from the Great Tribulation right down to the lake of fire? Now let's look at how the remaining 5 books tie into this.

Let's look at Habakkuk, which fits in between the 2nd and 3<sup>rd</sup> Woes, remember?

H) HABAKKUK means : LOVE'S EMBRACE

S.P.S. = 1:2-3

- 2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! [even] cry out unto thee [of] violence, and thou wilt not save!
- 3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause [me] to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence [are] before me: and there are [that] raise up strife and contention. (Habakkuk 1)

In this context of world troubles it asks the question: HOW LONG STILL UNTIL THE 2ND COMING OF CHRIST? In answer to this question God gives a run-down of end-time events, starting with God's Work and going on through the 3rd Woe.

We might say this book is an "inset" in the story-flow (like we also have in Revelation).

A brief outline:

1:3-4 = a lawless and liberal society;

1:5 = God's Church and Work in this context;

1:6-10 = the Great Tribulation;

1:11-17 = 5th Trumpet or 1st Woe (cf. Dan 11:38,44);

2:1-4 = FAITH is vital under such conditions;

2:5-19 = 6th Trumpet or 2nd Woe (esp. v.5,8);

2:20 = God is still in control;

3:2 = the Work of 1:5 has been replaced by a "famine" and in the midst of these troubles they'll say: revive your Work;

3:3-16 = 7th Trumpet, the 2nd coming of christ;

3:5 = 1st plague; 3:8 = 2nd + 3rd plagues;

3:11 = perhaps 4th + 5th plagues??

3:12 = 7th plague;

3:18-19 = rejoice at Christ's 2nd coming;

THIS ANSWERS THE QUESTION OF 1:2 ... HOW LONG ...?

Right, on your chart you can now enter a few "X"'s for Habakkuk. Do this under 5th Seal, 5th + 6th + 7th Trumpets, 1st + 2nd + 3rd + 4th + 5th + 7th Plagues.

That leaves 4 more books to cover, which are all in the Assyrian Period ... Joel, Amos, Obadiah and Micah. Let's look at Joel next:

I) JOEL means : GOD IS LORD OR RULER;  
S.P.S. = 1:2

Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? (Joel 1:2)

The question is: has anything like "THIS" ever happened in the past? The answer is: NO, because it is for the future. By "this" is meant the events that are described in the rest of the book of Joel. Predicting these events proves that God rules!

This description is quite similar to the one found in Habakkuk. A brief outline is:

1:4-5 = 3rd Seal;

1:6-7 = 5th Seal;

1:15 = 7th Seal;

1:17-19 = 1st Trumpet;  
1:20 = 3rd trumpet;  
2:1-10 = 6th trumpet;  
2:15-27 = 7th trumpet;  
3:2-14 = 6th Plague;  
3:16 = 7th Plague;  
3:17-21 = the millennium beyond.

So for Joel you can mark the "X"s on the chart under 3rd + 5th + 7th Seals, 1st + 3rd + 6th + 7th Trumpets and 6th + 7th Plagues. Like Habakkuk this is an "inset" book.

Now let's look at Obadiah ...

J) OBADIAH means : SERVANT OF THE LORD;  
S.P.S. = 1:1

The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. (Obadiah 1:1)

This talks about the punishment of Edom.

Key verses:

1:10,13 = they were against Israel in the Tribulation;  
they will be destroyed;

Daniel 11:41 implies they escape the 1st Woe ... so this is probably at the 2nd Woe ?!

Right, so let's mark the "X" for Obadiah under the 2nd Woe.

K) MICAH means : WHO IS LIKE GOD?  
S.P.S = 1:2-3

- 2 Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.
- 3 For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. (Micah 1)

What follows is a description of the wicked and corrupt society in "Israel" just before the 2nd coming of Christ. This is another "inset" book. Some key sections are:

1:1 = this applies to Judah AND Israel;  
1:3 = 2nd coming is very near;  
1:9,13,16 = Israel is IN captivity; so the book as a whole is placed sometime AFTER the tribulation has started ?!  
2:1-2 = society and its evils ... greed;  
3:1-2, 11 = leaders in Israel are corrupt;  
4:1-2 = Christ will replace them and rule;  
4:9-10 = but meanwhile ... captivity;  
5:2, 5-6 = Christ's rule will destroy Assyria/Babylon;  
6:2-12 = Israelite society and its evils;  
7:2-6 = a corrupt society.

Being more a description of conditions extant in society rather than of specific events, Micah is more difficult to place in our chart, but would probably belong somewhere between the Tribulation and the 2nd Woe.

That leaves just one more book ...

L) AMOS means : BURDEN or LOAD (i.e. PUNISHMENT);  
S.P.S. = 1:2

And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither. (Amos 1:2)

In this book penalties from God are pronounced ... first on 6 gentile nations and then on Judah and Israel. Of the 146 verses the first 16 are devoted to gentiles; the rest is addressed to Judah and Israel. Amos focuses on WHAT will happen without necessarily focusing in on the WHEN.

Other scriptures show that Judah and Israel are punished at the Tribulation, and the gentile nations at either the 1st or 2nd Woe. Much of the book describes Israelite society leading up to the Tribulation in a similar way to Micah.

Thus Amos is also difficult to mark on our chart, though it can be readily understood.

That completes our overview of the 12 Minor Prophets. NOW IT IS TIME TO STUDY THEM THOROUGHLY AND IN DETAIL!

My discussion of each book has been very brief. I have not tried to drive home my points. You are also a minister who knows the Bible quite well ... I have merely given enough to point you in certain directions with the full expectation that once the penny drops, you'll also see many other things that I cannot elaborate on in a brief discussion like this.

I hope this overview, together with the chart, has put the Minor Prophets into a new and more meaningful perspective.

Well, what do you think?

P.S. I'm not concerned about the "X"s being in the right place (we could quibble about shifting some of them) as much as the overall picture it produces. If you leave out the crosses for Joel + Habakkuk (which both give only an overview) the picture is even clearer. Amos + Micah don't have to fit into the chart either.