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UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

Sometimes, even for the most mature Christian, we have to work at understanding the Bible. As we are looking at prophets in this edition, here is a simple table that you can use to get to grips with the Bible's prophetic books.

OLD TESTAMENT MAJOR PROPHETS*

Book	Written By	Date	During Reign of	Theme	Why Was It Written?
Isaiah	Isaiah	739BC - 692BC	Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah	Salvation of the Lord.	To point to the Messiah and the restoration of the Kingdom.
Jeremiah	Jeremiah	627BC - 574BC	Josiah, Jehohaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoichin, Zedekiah	Judgement of the Lord.	To rebuke sin, warn of God's wrath, offer grace, hope and consolation.
Lamentations	prob. Jeremiah	ca. 586BC	Zedekiah	Mourning over judgement for Jerusalem's sin.	To express mourning over the fall of Jerusalem but hope for the future.
Ezekiel	Ezekiel	593 BC - 559BC	Zedekiah (King of Judah), Nebuchadnezzar (King of Babylon)	Sovereignty and Glory of God.	Due to unbelief, disobedience and rebellion. Sin caused exile but restoration was to come.
Daniel	Daniel	605 BC - 536BC	Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah (Kings of Judah), Nebuchadnezzar, Darius and Cyrus (Gentile Kings)	God's sovereign rule of the world.	To show ungodly nations that God alone is the true God. To show God's plan for the nations and the nation of Israel in world history.

OLD TESTAMENT MINOR PROPHETS*

Book	Written By	Date	During Reign of	Theme	Why Was It Written?
Hosea	Unknown	ca. 725 B.C.	During Reign of Jeroboam II, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Hoshea	The nation of Israel is given one last chance of restoration by God.	The nation of Israel was backslidden and ungodly.
Joel	Joel	ca. 820 B.C.	Joash	The day of the Lord.	To warn of judgement for sin, exhort to return to God and to show God has the last word!
Amos	Amos	ca. 756 B.C.	Ashurban III (King of Assyria), Jeroboam II (King of Israel) and Uzziah (King of Judah)	Sin, judgement for sin, holiness of God, deliverance by God.	So that the people would know God as their personal Lord.
Obadiah	Obadiah	ca. 840B.C. - 825 B.C.	Ahaziah, Athaliah, Joash	God delivers His people from their enemies.	Edom gloated over the nation of Israel's devastation by foreign powers.
Jonah	Jonah	ca. 770 B.C.	Adad-Niran III, Shalmaneser IV, Ashurban III (Kings of Assyria) Jehoash, Jeroboam II (Kings of Israel)	Salvation of God.	To encourage God's people to preach the gospel to all, God honours repentance, prophetic sign of salvation.
Micah	Micah	750BC - 686BC	Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah	God will send judgement for sin but pardon is offered.	The nation of Israel was backslidden and away from God.
Nahum	Nahum	650 BC - 620BC	Alanasseh, Amon, Josiah (Kings of Judah)	God will send judgement on the sinful but spare the righteous.	The people of Nineveh were arrogant and haughty. They refused to acknowledge God.
Habbakuk	Habbakuk	Either: 622BC - 612 BC or 612BC - 605BC or 605BC - 598BC	Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiakim	God must punish sin. Righteous live by faith.	The tribe of Judah was backslidden and away from God.
Zephaniah	Zephaniah	636BC - 623BC	Josiah	The coming day of the Lord and His judgement on the nations.	To announce the coming of God's judgement on the tribe of Judah.
Haggai	Haggai	520BC	Darius	The Jews were to make God and His house their priority.	The Jews were too busy building their own lives and neglected the building of the Temple.
Zechariah	Zechariah	520BC - 480BC	Darius	Encouragement to re-build the Temple. Foretelling of Messiah.	Jews too busy building their own homes. To record prophecy about the Messiah.
Malachi	Malachi	433BC	Artaxerxes I (King of Persia)	The love of God, judgement for sin and blessing for righteousness.	The Jews were weak in faith and backsliding was widespread.

NEW TESTAMENT

Book	Written By	Date	During Reign of	Theme	Why Was It Written?
Revelation	John	96 A.D.	Domitian	Remaining faithful to Christ and Christ's ultimate victory.	To encourage believers and to warn unbelievers of what awaits them.

*Please Note: 'Major' prophets are so called because their books are longer, not because their message is more important.