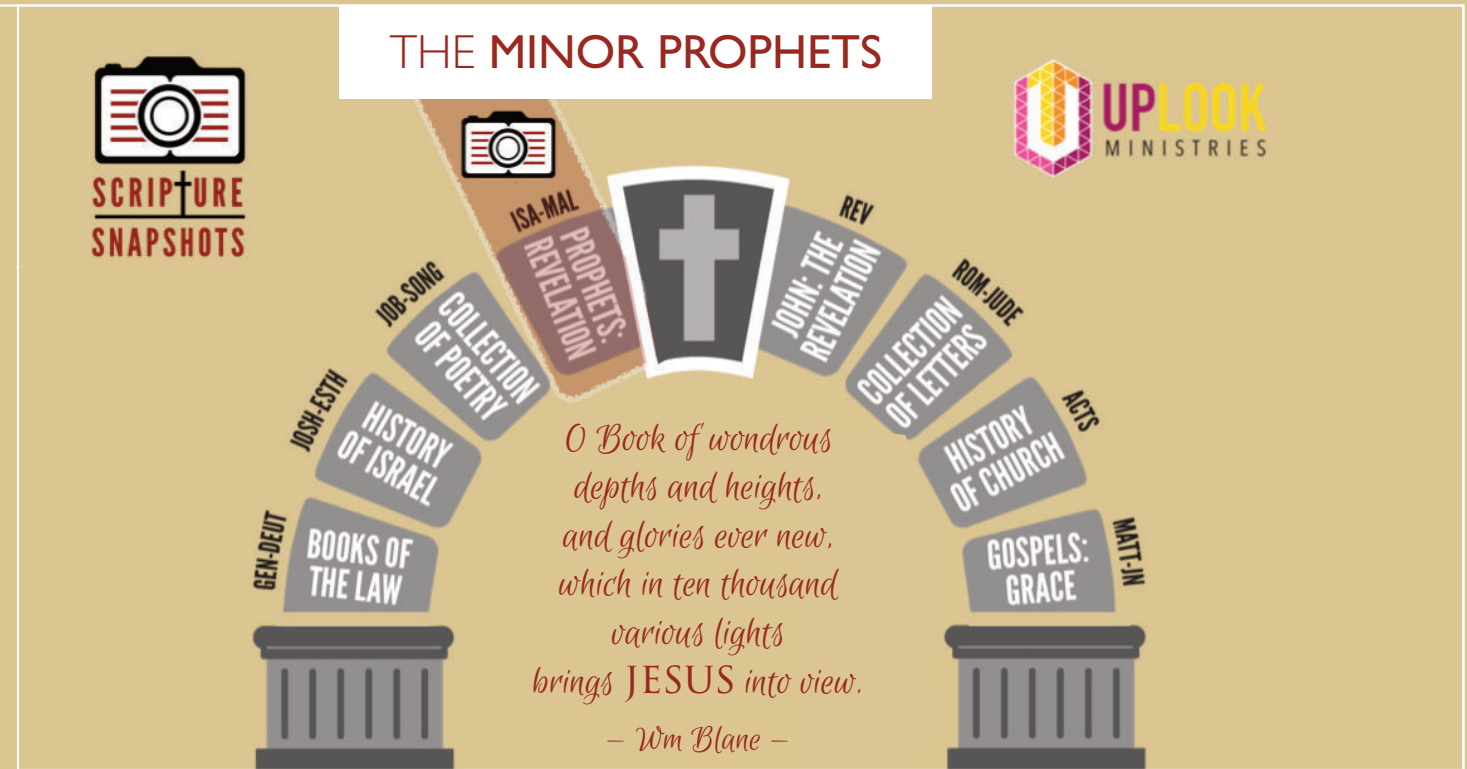




HOSEA: You've heard about the Prodigal Son. But have you heard of the Prodigal Wife? Meet Gomer, the wife of Hosea, who shockingly prostituted her love. But there's a bigger picture here of a Prodigal Nation: Israel turned her back on God. Watch both love stories unfold side-by-side in a drama which proves that love never fails. And, while we're at it, it might be a good idea to examine the fidelity of our own love for our Bridegroom (2 Cor 11:2).

JOEL: Paul, in writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor 4:3, margin), speaks of this present time as "Man's Day." Humanity seems to be getting their way, living with hardly a thought of the God in whose hand their breath is. But the Old Testament prophets — Joel prominent among them — introduce us to the Day of the Lord. The One presently ignored, despised, and resisted will soon return to set things right. The Lord gives Joel the opportunity to present the case for a time to come when, from heaven, the Lord will say to the inhabitants of this fragile, pale blue planet, "Gentlemen, it's closing time."

AMOS: "Amos had no thought of becoming a prophet, as men today select 'the ministry' as a profession. He would have been content to pursue his humble vocation as a farmhand, to the end of his life, if such had been the mind of God. But as he followed the flock, his soul was communing with Jehovah. As he gathered the wild figs, his heart was meditating on the great issues of the soul's relationship to God and the im-



portance of walking in His ways. As he tended the herds, he was learning lessons of a faithful Creator's love and care. And so the Lord kindled the already prepared fuel into a flame, and the humble herdman became a mighty, Spirit-energized prophet of God." (H. Ironside)

OBADIAH: No surprise that Jeremiah, the longest book in the Old Testament, shows the long-suffering grace of God. Obadiah, the shortest, speaks of judgment, His final act when mercy is refused. And what brings His judgment on Edom after hundreds of years of His patience? It is their pride and their ruthless treatment of His people! "The pride of your heart has deceived you" (v 3), says the Lord. And, regarding their attacks on God's people, He declares: "As you have done, it shall be done to you" (v 15). A good two-fold warning for us: Don't think too highly of yourself, and when you think about God's people, remember they're the apple of His eye!

JONAH: The days of King Jeroboam II were prosperous, but it is the commentary of God that "he did evil in the eyes of the Lord." Against this tide of iniquity was sent Jonah from Gath Hopher who "spoke the word of the Lord." But it is not for this the prophet is remembered. Reluctant to go as a missionary to even more wicked Nineveh, only God could use pagan sailors, a ferocious storm, a great fish, a plant, an east wind, and a worm to school Jonah in the persevering mercy of the Lord.

MICAH: The book of Micah, written more than seven centuries before Christ, is a study in contrasts. In a culture, then as now, where moral rottenness went right to the bones, Micah calls people to "do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." He bravely confronted the prophets, priests, and kings of his day, saying, "Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money." Is there any hope? Yes! God will intervene, sending the perfect King to Bethlehem, the Eternal One, the true Shepherd of Israel. And when He arrived, Israel's leaders — still corrupt and covetous — knew enough to quote the book of Micah to the wise men, and unwittingly acknowledged exactly where He had been born!

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NAHUM: Joseph Alexander could have been thinking about the prophecy of Nahum when he wrote: “There is a line, by us unseen, that crosses every path, the hidden boundary between God’s patience and His wrath.” In the darkest days of wicked King Manasseh’s rule, Nahum was given the solemn task of heralding the doom of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. The book is a classic reminder that God “will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever.” And one of these days, the Lord will look down on earth and say, “Gentlemen, it’s closing time!”

HABAKKUK: When our minds are confused and our hearts overwhelmed, the best thing to do is to follow Habakkuk’s example: talk it over with the Lord. Habakkuk wasn’t sure what concerned him more — that God at first didn’t seem to be doing anything about the evil all around, or that He was going to do something, by using the Chaldean army as a threshing instrument to mow down the wicked and idolatrous house of Judah. But the key to the book is at 2:4, “the just shall live by faith,” with a three-fold New Testament affirmation and application (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38). The prophet’s punchline? When all you have is God, God is enough!

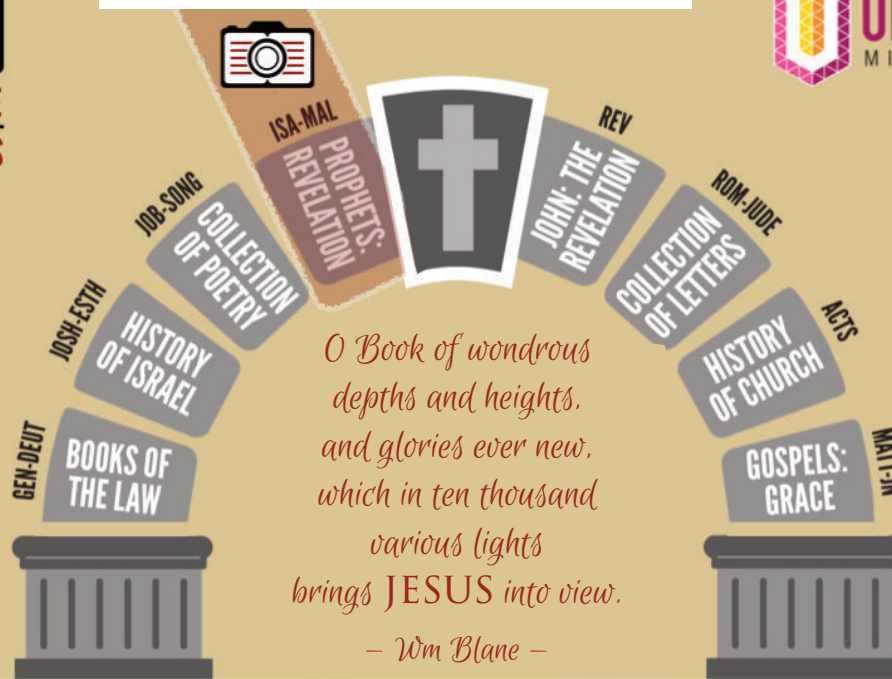
ZEPHANIAH: Man had become obnoxious in the sight of God, polluting the land with his idolatry and violence, defiling the whole creation. There was nothing but for him to disappear under God’s judgment. Yet, in the midst of corruption, there has always been a remnant that



fears God. Such are called on to seek Jehovah so that in the day of His anger they may be hidden: “Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth. . . it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger” (2:3). This brings us to the heart of the prophecy. Zephaniah means “hidden of the Lord,” and he foretells how the “hidden ones” will be brought through the storm of the last days into the joy and glory of the millennial world. Who but Christ could be the hiding-place of these godly Jews? From Him will come the resources to sustain them in their faithfulness to the truth. He will be their protector until the land is purged of the ungodly. At length God shows Himself mighty, not to judge, but to save. Instead of mourning over His wayward people, He will rejoice over them with joy. Whose singing? Ours? Israel’s? No: the Lord Himself “will joy over thee with singing” (3:17).

— From *Uplook* (May 1997)

THE MINOR PROPHETS



*O Book of wondrous
depths and heights,
and glories ever new,
which in ten thousand
various lights
brings JESUS into view.*

— Wm Blane —

HAGGAI: To understand the significance of Haggai’s messages, it is necessary to recall the special circumstances of this remnant. Seventy years before their return, the prophet Jeremiah, who lived in the closing days of the kingdom of Judah, had foretold that judgment would overtake the nation. Because of their wickedness, they would be carried into captivity at Babylon, and their land would become a desolation. Nevertheless, it was prophesied that after seventy years the Lord would cause them to return to their land. Enter Haggai with a call to get to work! God’s people had failed, but God never gives up His purpose, nor forsakes His people because of their failure. Such are His ways with you, child of God!

ZECHARIAH: How appropriate that the author, grandson of Iddo the priest, has the name “Zechariah,” meaning “Yahweh remembers.” This key book connects the prophetic dots for us, and

shows us that God does indeed remember. The One who promises also performs. This prophecy contains eight visions in chapters 1–6, four messages in chapters 7 and 8, and two burdens, or oracles, in chapters 9–14. The book is full of portraits of Christ and anticipates the day when not only the vessels in the temple but everything will be consecrated to the Lord’s special service, engraved with the insignia, “Holiness to the Lord.”

MALACHI: What is the Miracle of Malachi? First, that after a thousand years of disobedience, rebellion, neglect, idolatry, and outright disdain, God is still speaking to Israel. Second, that the first thing He says is: “I have LOVED you.” And third, that He still offers hope, and hope of the highest order — that His ultimate Messenger, the Messiah Himself, is still coming to rescue the lost and perishing. Who couldn’t love a God like that!

