



When we refer to the last twelve books of the Old Testament (Hosea through Malachi) as the “minor prophets,” it’s simply a reference to the brevity of the books not their importance. The minor prophetic books are just as inspired as the major prophetic books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

Just as God had promised through the prophet Jeremiah, Judah’s captivity lasted seventy years (Jer. 29:10), until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths (2 Chron. 36:21). Babylon deported the first of three groups of captives (which included Daniel) in 606/605 B.C. Seventy years later (536 B.C.), under the order of Cyrus, king of Persia, they were permitted to return to Jerusalem. The first of three groups to return numbered approximately 50,000. Included in the first group were: Zerubbabel (of the royal line of David, ancestor of both Joseph and Mary [see Matt. 1:12; Lke. 3:27]); Joshua, the high priest; and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

Because Solomon’s temple was completely destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., it was necessary to build a new temple. Work on the temple began and stopped in 535 B.C. In Ezra 4 we read that there was outside resistance to the rebuilding of the temple. When you read the first chapter of Haggai, we also discover that the people were so interested in their own personal affairs and activities that they had neglected the things of God. Then in 520 B.C., through the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah, work on the temple resumed and was completed in 516 B.C. Although Haggai preached only five short messages, and all within a four month period,

Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the LORD. Then Haggai, the LORD’S messenger, spoke the LORD’S message to the people saying, “I am with you, says the LORD.” So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God. (Haggai 1:12-14; cf. Ezra 5:2)

I would like for us to especially look at Haggai 2:7, particularly at “The Desire of All Nations.” Ancient rabbis, as well as the early church, saw this as a reference to the Messiah. As we will see, Jesus the Christ truly is the “Desire of All Nations” and the “Glory of Israel.”

## THE ROMANS

Rome itself was waiting for a world leader—a deliverer. Virgil, the Latin poet who lived at Rome only a few years before Christ’s first coming to earth, celebrates in one of his poems the birth of a “lovely boy with auspicious countenance,” a “celestial seed.” Although not inspired, it certainly rings with messianic tones when he wrote:

*The serpent’s brood shall die;  
The jarring nations he in peace shall bind,  
And with paternal virtues rule mankind.*

The prophet Isaiah wrote these inspired words:

For unto us a Child is born,  
Unto us a Son is given;  
And the government will be upon His shoulder.  
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end,  
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,  
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice,  
From that time forward, even forever.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isa. 9:6, 7)

Jesus *is* the Captain of our salvation. He has won a clear and decisive victory through His death, burial, and resurrection. He is our Deliverer from sin, Satan, and death. He never has lost a battle and never will! As believers, “We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

## THE GREEKS

The Greeks were looking for the ultimate philosopher. They had Plato (427-347 B.C.), Socrates (470-399 B.C.), and Aristotle (384-322 B.C.); yet they were looking for one who would have the answers to all the questions of philosophy—the inescapable questions of life. Plato wrote, “We must wait patiently until someone, either a god or an inspired man, teach us our religious duties and remove darkness from our eyes” (James Large, *Titles & Symbols of Christ*, 142). Jesus is both. He is all God *and* all man! Jesus is the *Wonderful Counselor* (Isa. 9:6). He is and has full and absolute knowledge and wisdom. Jesus is the very wisdom of God personified (1 Cor. 1:30). Paul wrote that, “In [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3).

## THE JEWS

Israel was looking for the Messiah—One who would bring salvation, fullness, and meaning to worship. Jesus was truly the fullness and fulfillment of all the Old Testament sacrifices, shadows, and symbols.

In GENESIS, Christ is seen as the *WOMAN’S CONQUERING SEED*

In EXODUS, He is our *PASSOVER LAMB*

In LEVITICUS, our *ATONING SACRIFICE*

He’s our *SMITTEN ROCK, THE STAR OF JACOB, and THE BRAZEN SERPENT* in the BOOK OF NUMBERS

Moses speaks of Him as *THE PROPHET*, in the BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

In JOSHUA, He is the *COMMANDER OF THE LORD’S ARMY*, and *JEHOVAH OUR SALVATION*

In JUDGES, He’s the *GREAT DELIVERER*

In RUTH, the book of romance *and* redemption, we see Christ as our *KINSMAN REDEEMER*

In 1 SAMUEL through 2 CHRONICLES, Christ is the *PROMISED KING*

In EZRA, we see Christ as *THE RESTORER OF THE TEMPLE*

In NEHEMIAH, He’s *THE RESTORER OF THE NATION*

In ESTHER, He is seen as *MORDECAI & ESTHER*, willing to intercede and die for His people

JOB refers to Him as “*MY REDEEMER*”

The PSALMIST DAVID, describes Him as “*MY SHEPHERD*”  
In PROVERBS, Christ is *MY PATTERN*  
In ECCLESIASTES, He’s *MY GOAL*  
In THE SONG OF SOLOMON, Christ is seen as *MY BELOVED*  
ISAIAH describes Jesus as *THE SUFFERING LAMB—THE BRANCH*—and *THE CHIEF CORNER STONE*  
In JEREMIAH, Christ is seen as *THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS* and *THE GIVER OF THE NEW COVENANT*  
In LAMENTATIONS, He’s *THE WEeping PROPHEt*  
In EZEKIEL, Christ is *GOD’S ONE SHEPHERD*  
DANIEL refers to Christ as *THE STONE HEWN OUT OF THE MOUNTAIN*  
In HOSEA, we are reminded *HE LOVES TO THE UTTERMOST*  
In JONAH, He *EXTENDS SALVATION TO THE NATIONS*  
In MICAH, He is the *ETERNAL RULER*, yet born in the little hamlet of Bethlehem of Judah  
In HAGGAI, He is *THE DESIRE OF THE NATIONS*  
And in ZECHARIAH, Jesus is the *LOWLY KING* and the *SMITTEN SHEPHERD*

Even the writers of the Synoptic Gospels realized that all the hopes and desires of the nations were concentrated in Christ. They understood that the purposes of God toward the entire human race were brought by Him to full completion.

## **MATTHEW**

Matthew focused on a Jewish audience and presented Jesus as King. He began the book with the genealogy of Jesus traced back to Abraham and followed with the royal line of David. Matthew quoted more than sixty references from the Old Testament, emphasizing how Christ fulfilled each promise. Such theme would be significant to the Jewish reader.

## **MARK**

Mark targeted a Roman audience and presented Jesus as the Suffering Servant. Jesus said of Himself, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mrk. 10:45).

## **LUKE**

Luke presented Christ as the Son of Man and targeted the Greeks (Luke himself a Greek). Aiming to show Christ as the Redeemer of humanity, Luke’s genealogy of Jesus goes all the way back to Adam. Luke focused on Jesus’ interaction and compassion for Gentiles, Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, sinners, and others regarded as outcasts of society. Again, Jesus said of Himself, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lke. 19:10).

We even see an emphasis on the nations at Christ’s death. And what Pilate meant as a ploy of contempt, God used for His glory. Upon crucifixion, a description of the victim’s crimes customarily was written on a placard and placed around the victim’s neck on his way to execution. It would then be nailed to the vertical beam of the cross, just above the victim’s head. Upon Jesus’ crucifixion,

Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was:

JESUS OF NAZARETH,  
THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. (Jhn. 19:19-20)

As an insult to the Jews, Pilate not only referred to Jesus as King of the Jews, but also reminded them He was from Nazareth of Galilee—from the “other side of the tracks.” Then to make matters worse, he wrote it in three languages. This way all of those present at Passover would be able to read it, no matter what language they spoke. But what man meant for evil, God meant for good! God’s heart has always been for the nations. Always!

#### **\*HEBREW**

Hebrew is the language of religion. But it’s only through repentance of sin and faith in Christ that we can genuinely worship the true living God in spirit and truth. Instead of dead religion (i.e., man trying to reach God), God offers us a living and life-changing relationship with Himself (i.e., God coming to man).

#### **\*GREEK**

Greek is the language of culture and philosophy. True wisdom comes by personally knowing God through Jesus Christ and building our lives upon His Word. The wise man Solomon wrote, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9:10).

#### **\*LATIN**

Latin is the language of law and government. One day when Jesus returns to earth,

He shall judge between the nations,  
And rebuke many people; [Rev. 19]  
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
And their spears into pruning hooks;  
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
Neither shall they learn war anymore. —Isa. 2:4

When Jesus returns to earth to set up His earthly Kingdom, he shall return as King of kings and Lord of lords. His church shall also return with Him, and we shall reign with Him a thousand years! Until then, He longs to rule and reign upon the throne of our hearts. Although there is unrest and confusion among the nations today, through Christ you can personally have peace with God and the peace of God. You no longer have to be at odds with Him. Only Christ can bridge the gap between sinful man and holy God. Today, this very moment, He longs to restore you and reconcile you back to Himself. He longs to give you perfect peace; lasting peace; a peace that surpasses all comprehension.

## CONCLUSION

But how do you explain the paradox? The very One who came and *is* coming as the *Desire of All Nations*, continues to be ridiculed and rejected. People continue to resort to all kinds of things hoping to find lasting happiness and joy. They try to fill such longings with more money; a furthered education; different (or more) friends; a nicer home; better health; their profession; the list goes on and on. Such things are not bad in-and-of themselves. But the truth is, it's just like Augustine said: "Our souls are restless until they find rest in Thee." As long as we are separated from God due to sin, nothing else can-or-will fill the void and vacuum in the human soul. Anything other than Jesus Christ is nothing more than a spiritual band-aid, or like a medication that simply masks the real problem of the human soul: SIN.

Phillips Brooks was right when he penned the words of *O Little Town of Bethlehem*: "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight." But they met not simply in a place, but in a Person; not just in Bethlehem, but in a Baby: Jesus, The Desire of All Nations.

\* See *The Death And Trial Of Jesus Christ* by James Stalker.

\**Christ In The Old Testament* is from various sources.