READING THE MINOR PROPHETS TOGETHER
SEPTEMBER 2026

What?	The Minor Prophets are a collection of 12 books, which appear in Hebrew Bibles as one book. They are "minor" in length, but not in importance! For September, we'll read the last four (Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi) as these connect with our July readings in Ezra and Nehemiah. God spoke through these prophets in the past, and still speaks to his people through these words today.
When?	Zephaniah prophesied to Judah during the reign of King Josiah (640–609 BC), warning about the coming judgement of exile. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were all written after the return from exile. Haggai and Zechariah were contemporaries in the late 500s BC. Malachi's ministry was probably later, perhaps 100 years after the return from exile.
Why?	These prophets spoke in different contexts but had a common task of calling people to repentance, with warnings of coming judgement and promises of future restoration. They also helped people wait for the Messiah; quotations in the New Testament show how Jesus fulfilled these hopes. The prophets use the phrase "the Day of the Lord" to describe God's final victory. Jesus has already fulfilled some of these words, for others we eagerly await his return.

INTRODUCING ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King Josiah. Despite Josiah's spiritual reforms, the nation persisted in unfaithfulness, later leading to exile. Zephaniah called people to seek the Lord with words of both warning and blessing, in three sections:

- 1:1–2:3 – The day of the Lord is coming, bringing judgement for Judah and Jerusalem;
- 2:4–3:8 – Warnings for the nations as well as Jerusalem;
- 3:9–20 – Future hope, when the Lord gathers his people.

INTRODUCING HAGGAI

Haggai is mentioned in Ezra 5:1, prophesying to those who returned from exile. By this point, initial work on rebuilding the temple had stalled when the people faced opposition and then changed priorities. Haggai challenged the people to return to the work, reminding them of the Lord's commitment to them now and in the future. Their present circumstances may not have matched expectations, but the Lord still had great plans. Haggai spoke four messages over the course of four months in 520 BC:

- 1:1–15 – A command to rebuild and a positive response;
- 2:1–9 – Promises of greater glory still to come;
- 2:10–19 – A call to holiness, using an illustration from consecrated food;
- 2:20–23 – Promises to Zerubbabel, a descendant of David, from whose line the Messiah would come (Matthew 1:12).

INTRODUCING ZECHARIAH

A contemporary of Haggai, Zechariah addressed the discouragement of those who returned from exile but were not experiencing the expected blessings. He preached hope in God's purposes and encouraged faithfulness. This is a difficult book – don't forget to ask God for help! There are three main sections:

- 1–6 – Eight visions giving insight into God's plans for his people, centring on words concerning Joshua (the high priest) and Zerubbabel (in David's royal line);
- 7–8 – Messages about fasts and feasts;
- 9–14 – Two prophecies about the coming of God's King, the Messiah, and his future kingdom, when the nations will be gathered in a holy New Jerusalem.

INTRODUCING MALACHI

Malachi's prophecies are undated, but may have been spoken around 100 years after the return from exile. Although the temple had been rebuilt, there were ongoing issues with unfaithfulness, as we saw in Nehemiah. The book takes the form of six disputes between the people and their God:

- 1:1–2:5 – God reminds them of his covenant love;
- 1:6–2:9 – God challenges their corrupt worship;
- 2:10–16 – God accuses them of unfaithfulness;
- 2:17–3:5 – God promises to purify his people;
- 3:6–12 – God calls them to repentance in their tithing;
- 3:13–18 – God answers their accusation of injustice;
- 4:1–6 – God will send Elijah to herald the Day of the Lord.

A SUGGESTED 30-DAY READING PLAN

☐ Zephaniah 1:1–2:3	☐ Zechariah 3	☐ Zechariah 13
☐ Zephaniah 2:4–3:8	☐ Zechariah 4	☐ Zechariah 14
☐ Zephaniah 3:9–20	☐ Zechariah 5	☐ Review
☐ Review	☐ Zechariah 6	☐ Malachi 1:1–5
☐ Haggai 1:1–15	☐ Zechariah 7	☐ Malachi 1:6–2:9
☐ Haggai 2:1–9	☐ Zechariah 8	☐ Malachi 2:10–16
☐ Haggai 2:10–23	☐ Zechariah 9	☐ Malachi 2:17–3:5
☐ Review	☐ Zechariah 10	☐ Malachi 3:6–12
☐ Zechariah 1	☐ Zechariah 11	☐ Malachi 3:13–18
☐ Zechariah 2	☐ Zechariah 12	☐ Malachi 4:1–6

FIVE KEY QUESTIONS

There are resources you may find helpful on our website: litchardmission.co.uk/rbt.

1. What does this passage teach me about God's character and power?

2. How do these verses point me to the kingship and saving work of Jesus?

3. How do these words help me to trust Jesus while I wait for the final fulfilment of his promises?

4. Is God calling me to repentance through these words?

5. How can I use these words to pray for Litchard Mission?