

The Minor Profits

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Date: 11 December 2018

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[0 : 0 0] All right, by a kind of popular consensus, we have decided to undertake the study of the minor prophets, and we are doing so in a chronological fashion rather than in the way that they appear in the canon of most of our Bibles, which starts out with Hosea, but we are beginning with the chronology, and that involves the earliest of the prophets, of the minor prophets, and that would be Jonah.

Actually, it's Hosea, Joel, and Amos. Jonah is further down the pike, but we're going to begin with them because we're trying to keep them, as I mentioned, in historical perspective.

And we've already engaged chapter 1. I think we can consider that completed, and we're going to be opening with chapter 2 now. Now, there is a great deal of, not only history, but a great deal of biblical principles that are found in all of the minor prophets.

And they, as well as the major prophets, tend to be overlooked by a lot of Christians because, first of all, they are in the Old Testament. And you would be surprised how many Christians think that the Old Testament really doesn't matter.

The New Testament's where we're at. And the Old is just ancient history. But tell us, there is no possibility of understanding or making sense of the New Testament if you do not have the foundation of the Old.

[1 : 3 3] It is absolutely essential, and everything in the Old Testament is just as much a part of the Word of God as is John 3.16.

And we need to keep that in mind because all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable, and that includes the Old Testament. So we, without apology, engage some of these studies in the Old Testament, and the minor prophets being one of them.

It is safe to say that the portion we are now considering, well, maybe Jonah would be an exception because just about everybody is somewhat familiar with Jonah. But, by and large, the minor prophets are pretty much ignored, and yet they are absolutely rich and overflowing with all kinds of scriptural principles that are applicable to life from the Old Testament just as well as the New, because all of the Scriptures are profitable.

So, we're going to engage chapter 2 now, and we are dealing with the rebellious prophet, the reluctant prophet. And I don't know of anything else that we can call him other than the arrogant prophet.

He was a man who had a covenant relationship with the one true God, and he knew something about the awesomeness and the size and the nature of God, and yet this guy, in his humanity, in his arrogance, took it unto himself to defy the Almighty when he called him to go to Nineveh, and he headed in the opposite direction.

[3 : 1 9] I'm not going there. I'm not doing that. I'm not doing that. And he took off and headed in the opposite direction. And you know the rest of the story as chapter 1 reveals it.

The Lord appointed a great fish to swallow him up, and Jonah is going to learn the blessings and advantage of obedience. But he's going to learn in a tough way.

And chapter 2 opens with his plea for help. We read, then, and keep in mind there's no chapter divisions here.

In verse 17 of the preceding chapter, the Lord appointed a great fish. It doesn't say it was a whale. It just says it was a great fish. It may have been one of a kind specifically for this situation.

We don't know. Jonah prayed to the Lord. They appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

[4 : 16] And as we pointed out earlier, scholars are divided on whether he actually died and was literally resurrected or came back to life after three days, which is a pretty full type of the resurrection of Christ, or whether he was sustained in life for that whole three-day period, which, humanly speaking, is hard to imagine.

But this is a non-human situation, too. This is the Almighty taking charge of it. And we don't know. Maybe he provided some way for Jonah to survive the gastric juices of that fish that would have consumed him.

Or maybe he died. We just don't know. We just don't know. But at any rate, after a period of time being there, we are told that Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the stomach of the fish.

And he said, I called out of my distress to the Lord, and he answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol.

Thou didst hear my voice. Well, Jonah heard God's voice before, but he ignored it and took off and headed in the wrong direction. And by the way, fellas, this is just one more of several examples of divine discipline that God often brings into a believer's life when we are walking in disobedience to him.

[5 : 52] I call this God taking his own children to the woodshed. And sometimes we need a visit to the woodshed. We need to be disciplined.

We need to be chastised. And the writer of Hebrews talks about that. For what son is he whom the Lord chastens not? But if you endure chastening, whereof all are partakers, if you do not endure chastening, if you do not undergo child correction or discipline, then it's because you are bastards and not sons.

God only disciplines his own children. He does not discipline the devil's children. And Jonah was in covenant relationship with Jehovah.

He was probably the equivalent of what we would call an Old Testament believer. And he had embraced the concept of the one true God. And now God is calling him to go to a pagan people who are idolatrous and turned their nose up at the concept of one true God.

Plus, these people had a horrendous reputation for being among Israel's staunchest enemies. Created a lot of grief for Israel.

[7 : 08] These are neighbors to the north. And eventually, it will be these people. What we're talking about now is approximately, let's see, approximately the division of the kingdoms came in 720, or 930.

About 931 B.C., just not too many years, about 40 or 50 years after David the king passed away.

And we've already read and considered the division of the kingdom. And these people, the Assyrians to the north, are eventually, after the kingdom is divided in the north and south, and the new capital has been established, the Samaria in the north, it will be 722.

About 200 years after the kingdom is divided, 722, the Assyrians are going to come down from the north, invade northern Israel, put the city of Samaria under siege, and this is when people will be resorting to cannibalism to try to survive.

And they are going to be overrun by the Assyrians, and they will take many of them captive off to the land of Assyria, while the two tribes in the south remain intact, and they're going to succumb later to the Babylonians from the south.

[8 : 48] But these Assyrians are going to leave a contingency of Jews there in northern Israel, primarily to farm the land, and send the produce north to Assyria.

And they're going to leave a certain number of these northern Jews there, who eventually will intermarry with those occupying them, just like GIs intermarried with Japanese women during the occupation, and German women during the occupation there after the war.

This is just as old as it gets, boy meets girl thing. And they're going to produce a new kind of people who will be known as the Samaritans.

And the Jews and the Samaritans have no dealings, you know, during the time of Jesus. So we're fast-forwarding there again. So we've got a situation here that is just rich with history, and is filled with all kinds of resentment and bad feelings between these people, because the Jews consider the Samaritans as half-breed.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. So let's get back to Jonah here. And Jonah is crying out to the Lord, Curran engulfed me, all thy breakers and billows passed over me.

[10 : 08] So I said, I have been expelled from thy sight. Nevertheless, I will look again toward thy holy temple. Now this is nothing more than a tacit statement on the part of Jonah admitting that he has seen the light.

And he is having a change of heart. And when that expression is used there, he says that he has, in verse 7, I was fading away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to thee, the Lord, into thy holy temple.

This is Jonah backtracking. This is Jonah coming around, seeing the reasonableness of doing God's thing, God's way.

This is a change of heart on the part of Jonah. It is out of desperation that he is crying. And by the way, just to tie in that passage in Romans 10, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

And there's only one reason why anybody calls. Anybody. And that is, they have entered into a sense of felt need, desperation, for which they are not adequate.

[11 : 38] And it is time to wake up and smell the coffee and cry out to the only one who can do anything about your situation. Because one thing is for sure, you can't.

And this is a picture that is repeated throughout Scripture of man coming to the end of himself. And fellas, I tell you this much from personal experience.

you are no good to God or anybody else. Until or unless you come to an end of yourself. And it is humiliating, humbling to do so.

We are not as smart as we'd like to think. We are not as strong as we'd like to think. We are not as capable as we'd like to think. We are like those to whom Jesus spoke as his apostles.

Without me, you can do nothing. Face it. Deal with it. And when you come to realize that you really are nothing, then you're in a position for the Lord to do something with you.

[12 : 43] And many of us have found that to be true in so many cases. Jonah's finding it to be true. This is an age-old principle. And you know what this is tied with? It's all about repentance.

And that word that we've defined so many times simply means a change of mind where you reverse yourself from a previously held position because you have seen the light and you recognize the way you were going is not the right way.

I need to change directions. And when you repent, you simply change your mind and it is an acknowledgement that you are wrong, that you have been wrong.

And the reason that this, I refer to this repentance as God's silver bullet. Fellas, there is absolutely nothing that will turn a life around for a nation more quickly and more fully than this.

It is coming into the reality of what the reality is and recognizing that you can't change it and you reverse your position, your thinking, you change your mind.

- [13 : 59] And this is always involved even in personal salvation. You cannot, you cannot come to faith in Christ without repentance. Because repentance means you have to change your thinking, change your position, change your mind from what you thought about salvation before to what God reveals about salvation.

And you know the whole litany, I'm not a bad guy, I'm a good person, I'm good enough, blah, blah, blah. Well, when you repent, you change your mind about all that. And you see yourself like God sees you and then you are in a position to reach out to Him.

And it always comes from a sense of felt need, awakened need. And what causes us to be awakened is information.

Information. That's what the gospel is all about. When you preach the gospel, give people the truth of the gospel, you give them a reason to change their mind, to repent.

Here, Jonah's information is personal experience. It's what he is suffering with this great fish. And he comes to the realization that, hey, I have been completely wrong about this thing.

- [15 : 14] It's time that I get my act together. So he calls out to the Lord and it is as much as a tacit admission that he was wrong in fleeing from the Lord and he's ready to get back on track.

And that, fellas, nothing, nothing delights the heart of God more than our repentance. Because when we repent, whether it is salvation and coming to faith, or whether it is some sin that we've been coddling or covering up or whatever, when we repent and change our mind, we are taking God's part against ourselves.

Hey, that's why it's so hard to do. It does a job on your ego. It does a job maybe on your plans. It does a job on your estimation of yourself.

It is an acknowledgement that you are wrong. And the reason God loves repentance so much is when we repent and come to the truth of the situation, God is a God of truth and he loves truth.

And when we repent and come from our position to his position, all we are doing is aligning ourselves with his position. That's where we need to be. Our Lord said that there is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner who repents.

- [16 : 53] It's a beautiful word. This is God's silver bullet. Jonah is repenting here and God is ready to put him back. And this is the second beginning. This is the new beginning. And that's the beauty of this thing.

God is the God of the second chance. And he's the God of the third chance. And he's the God of the fourth chance. And sometimes that's what we need because we have different things to repent of all along the way.

So Jonah is crying out, water, verse 5, encompassed me to the point of death. Great deep engulfed me. This is testimony. Weeds were wrapped around my head. You can just picture this scene.

I descended to the roots of the mountains. This is the ocean floor. You are aware that there are great mountain ranges under the seas, under the oceans.

And there is here under these too. And he's saying that he went clear down to the bottom. I don't know, but you kind of get the impression that this great fish, whatever it was, kind of went to the depths and maybe settled.

- [17 : 56] Just was resting at the base of undersea mountains. And Jonah is there with it. And this is what he's talking about. I descended to the roots or the ocean floor of the mountains.

The earth with its bars was around me forever. But thou hast brought up my life from the pit. O Lord my God, while I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord and my prayer came to thee into thy holy temple.

Wow. What a wake-up call. Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness. But to whom is God calling Jonah to go?

To the Ninevites. These people are not only famous for their horrific cruelty to fellow human beings, but they were as idolatrous as you could be.

And in fact, this is a study that sometime I'd like to engage in this because it is so germane to all of Scripture. And that is the principle of idolatry.

[19 : 13] it seems to be man's number one curse. And I think this is precisely why it heads the list of the commandments.

Thou shalt have no other God besides me. God, as the creator and sustainer of the universe, frankly, is somewhat jealous.

When men give credit for what he has done to dumb idols and statues, God is insulted. He is offended. And yet, this is exactly what men are prone to do.

And you know, this is exactly what our first parents did. When Eve and then Adam succumbed to the temptation of the serpent, all they were doing was acknowledging the creature more than the creator.

And they put Satan and his word ahead of God and his word, which was, thou shalt not eat of. And they transferred their authority from God who created them to Satan who was a creature himself.

[20 : 37] And this is precisely, I think, what Paul is referring to in Romans 1 when he says that they did not acknowledge him as God and they served the creature rather than the creator. And it started in Genesis 3 and men have been doing this ever since.

And who do men worship today? Generally, other men, other people. You know, we have our idols. Human idols and of course there are other things like money and all of that stuff that goes with it.

So, Jonah is saying, those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness, but I will sacrifice to thee with the voice of thanksgiving that which I have vowed I will pay.

Now, we don't have any record of what it was that Jonah had ever vowed. but the making of vows was a very important thing in the Jewish economy and in the culture of that day.

And it was not something to be trifled with. And we are not told what Jonah's vow was. But we do get the distinct impression that he was not abiding by it.

[21 : 48] He was violating the vows that he made. Now he's being called back to it. And he says, that which I have vowed I will pay.

Well, we can only speculate as to what his vow might have been. But I think it is very apparent that he has reneged on it.

Who knows? Maybe he vowed, Lord, I want to be completely at your service and available to whatever you want me to do. Hypothetically, maybe that was it.

And God said, okay, I want you to go to Nineveh. Oh, I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to do that. So, that's just a hypothetical possibility. Whatever it was, he reneged on it.

Roger? Is there any reason he hasn't had conversations with the Lord before? I'm sorry? Would there be any reason he hasn't had conversations with God before?

[22 : 49] Before this? Yeah, well, we don't know. He may have had conversations, he may have made vows to the Lord as a young man. We just don't know. But it is apparent that he had made some kind of vow, and it appears that he is repairing to that now, and he's saying, at least this is what I get from it, okay, I know I made a vow, and I know I haven't been keeping it, but I'm ready to take it up again and get serious about it.

That's the impression that I get. Any other thoughts about that, Dan? Hey, Mark, can I be a skeptic here? Sure. Could this be that it was a dream on the boat while he was down there sleeping?

I mean, I don't want to question that, you know, but I said, did that actually happen? I mean, yes, I believe that.

Yeah. Well, I guess anything is possible, but you have to ask whether it is probable. And the thing that leads me to discount that as being a dream is what our Lord said, as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, even so must the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

And I kind of get the impression that if it had been a dream, I think maybe our Lord would have referred to that.

[24 : 14] You know, Jonah dreamed a dream, and this is what he dreamed. But he gives every indication Jesus does in the Gospels, hundreds of years after this event, he gives every indication that what Jonah experienced, Jonah experienced that it was not a dream, it was real.

And in fact, there's nothing supernatural about dreams. We all have them. Most of mine don't make any sense, and I can't figure out why I dreamed what I did. And the Bible uses dreams.

Sometimes God speaks to people through dreams. And the difference between a vision and a dream is that a dream is the picture of the scenario you have when you're sleeping, and a vision is the same kind of scenario, only you're wide awake.

This is what Peter experienced on the rooftop in Acts 10 with Cornelius, about Cornelius, he saw this vision of the sheet let down from heaven. So he was wide awake, but he saw the vision.

So I suppose that is a possibility, but I would discount it because of what our Lord said. Any other thoughts? Roger? It looks like in verse 7 he's actually dying, looking to the Lord.

[25 : 26] Yeah, and like I said in an earlier study, scholars are divided over whether he actually died, or whether he was just preserved miraculously during this time.

And I suppose it depends on how closely we want this to align to the reality of the resurrection of Christ, because there wasn't any question that he was dead for three days, and there can be no question as to the ability of God to have allowed Jonah to die, and to bring him back.

In fact, we're going to see Sunday in one of the several miracles that occur with the death of Christ while he is on the cross.

One of them is, and this is really, really weird, one of the most difficult things I've ever dealt with and still won't have answers to, that the graves are going to be opened, and there will be many of the saints appear in Jerusalem after Christ's resurrection.

Now, Matthew mentions that, that it's after the resurrection, but it doesn't occur at the same time. I mean, the graves open.

[26 : 47] It appears that the graves open during that three-hour period that the Lord has separated and the darkness is on the earth, but then it is not until after the resurrection, three days later, that these saints, and it doesn't say how many, it just says multiple saints, came out of those graves and appeared to many in Jerusalem.

Who were these people? And to whom did they appear? And what did they say? And what happened to them? I don't know, but that's something else. We've got to get on here. these idols forsake their faithfulness, but I will sacrifice to thee with the voice of thanksgiving, that which I have vowed I will pay.

Salvation is from the Lord. Then, then, it almost looks like as soon as Jonah got his spiritual life and act together through this repentance and confession, then, the Lord said, okay, now that that's out of the way, we'll get on with the program.

And, we read that the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.

I cannot help but wonder, what did that smell like? What did it look like? Can you see this guy lying there on the beach after this fish vomits him out?

[28 : 21] He's got seaweed tangled around him. He's got the odor and the puke of that fish clinging to him. And, somebody walking along the beach from Nineveh, and Jonah rises up and says, repent.

That would have been some kind of scene, wouldn't it? And, yet, this is what he's going to be called upon to do. And, I want to firm this up as to his reluctance and unwillingness to go there.

Jonah hated these people with a passion, and probably all the Jews did, because they were proverbial enemies of Israel. And, Jonah had the kind of, come back for just a moment to, Luke, keep your place there if you will, come back to Luke chapter 9.

I want to show you a kind of attitude here. And, I think this was Jonah's attitude in the Old Testament. Luke chapter 9. And, what we're doing from Jonah, guys, is we are fast-forwarding about 700 years.

Alright? So, the relationship between the Assyrians and Israel has been germinating for about 700 years, and there was a deep hatred that had developed between the Jews and the Samaritans.

[29 : 55] And, these are the ones of whom the scriptures say for the Jews and the Samaritans have no dealings with each other. And, in chapter 9 of Luke's gospel, we read about, in verse 51, came about when the days were approaching for his ascension, that is, ascension to, not ascension to heaven, but his ascension to Jerusalem, because it's called ascension because they're going up topographically, that he resolutely set his face to go to Jerusalem.

And, there were those who tried to talk him out of it among his own disciples, said, you know what happened the last time you were there? We don't want to go there now. And, Jesus would not be denied because he knew this was his hour that was come, and that he's making this final trip to Jerusalem, it's going to culminate in his crucifixion.

And, we are told that in verse 52, he sent messengers on ahead of him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritan to make arrangements for him.

Now, it's remarkable that they're even there. And, this is the same area where Jesus encounters the woman at the well. And, that's in Samaria, in John chapter 4.

But, Jesus does not have the prejudice against the Samaritans that his own apostles have. And, they are very anti-Samaritan, if you will.

[31 : 30] And, he entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for him, probably reluctantly. And, they, that is the Samaritans, they did, they did not receive him.

Because, he, that is Jesus, was journeying with his face toward Jerusalem. The Samaritans knew where Jesus was going.

He was going to Jerusalem. That automatically makes him wrong. We don't want anything to do with him. He's going to Jerusalem. Well, his disciples, verse 54, James and John saw this.

These are the sons of Zebedee, two of his earlier apostles. And, they are brothers in the fishing business. John's going to write this gospel, the gospel of John later.

And, they saw this. They said, Lord, you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? That's the way you deal with the Samaritans.

[32 : 39] They, obviously, were not kindly receptive to Jesus because they saw, they knew where he was going. He's going to Jerusalem. So, we don't want anything to do with him. And, these guys are called sons of thunder.

And, this is how they got their name. They're very rash and very impetuous. And, they are ready to deal with this situation right now. And, they said, how about we just call down our now.

We call down our Lord, the Father, the Son, the Son, the earth, the Son.

The Son, the Son, who are the and who are the S ■ who are the little are.