

The Minor Profits

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[0 : 0 0] We are commencing a new study today. We are coming closer to the end of our investigation of the Minor Prophets. I want to remind you that our undertaking of the Minor Prophets was a decision that you all made when you were given the option a number of months ago as to what you would like to undertake, and the consensus was that you wanted to investigate the Minor Prophets.

So that's what we have been doing, and up to this point in time, as of several months ago, we have already considered all of the pre-exilic prophets, and by that I mean out of the 12 Minor Prophets we have, nine of them were called of God to pen their works to be made available to us prior to 586 B.C.

That was the time when the northern or the southern two tribes of Judah and Benjamin would be led into Babylonian captivity, which is commonly referred to as the exile.

They are going to be exiled, rooted up and out of their land, carried off to Babylon, where they will reside for approximately 70 years.

It's referred to as the Babylonian captivity. And at the end of that conclusion of time, they will return at least about 50,000 of them, but there will be a greater number of Jews who will not be returning.

[1 : 4 0] They will remain in Babylon. And while, let me just back up a little bit, because what is going to take place, I think, is necessary to bring us up to speed to where we are with Zechariah.

When they were in the Babylonian captivity during that time, Babylon, their captors, was itself invaded by the Medes and the Persians.

And they were the ones who, as a result of Belshazzar, seeing the writing on the wall in Daniel chapter 5, that you weighed in the balances and found wanting.

They were having this drunken orgy party, you recall. And at that time, the Medes and the Persians were not only at the gate, but they had diverted the river, and they were coming in, swarming into the city of Babylon on the riverbed that they had diverted.

And they caught the Babylonians by complete surprise, soundly defeated them, and as a result, the Medo-Persian Empire came into being, and the Babylonians were now their prisoners.

[2 : 5 3] So the Jews end up being prisoners of prisoners. And this is the time frame that we are talking about that also will involve Queen Esther under Ahasuerus.

So this time frame is all involved. And once the Babylonians had been conquered by the Medes and the Persians, it was then Darius the king of the Medes and the Persians granted to the Jews their right to return to the land.

And this came about as a result, you'll recall, of Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer, going into the king's presence. He had a pretty sad-looking face. And the king, King Darius, looked at Nehemiah and said, you look like you lost your best friend.

Why are you so down today? And he said, I've received word from my homeland. And the walls are broken down, and the city is ruined, and the place is in complete disrepair, and it deeply saddens me.

And the king took it upon himself to authorize the return of the Jews to Israel and from their own treasury to provide the building materials and a military escort for the Jews to return to the land, rebuild the wall, rebuild the city, and all the rest of it.

[4 : 21] And it was a glorious thing that God had arranged for the people to return to Israel, rebuild the walls under Nehemiah. The new governor would be Zerubbabel, but there would be no king because the last king had been deposed, and he was Zedekiah.

He was the one when the Babylonians invaded. In 586 B.C., they captured Zedekiah as he tried to escape. They forced him to witness the execution of all of his sons.

Then they put out his eyes and made him walk with thousands of other Jews all the way to the land of Babylon. And there they will be for 70 years.

And during that time, of course, and by the way, one of the captives of Babylon will be a very young man, perhaps no older than 10 or 12 years of age at the time, and his name will be Daniel.

And Daniel will be in Babylon for virtually the entirety of his lifetime. And as an older man, he gives us the visions that we see in the book of Daniel. And when it's time then for them to return, as I said, about 50,000 will return to Israel, but the majority of the Jews will remain in Babylon because it is now a new generation.

[5 : 50] The old generation of Jews that were originally led into captivity of Babylon have died off and their children and grandchildren are there now. And guess what?

They put down roots in Babylon. They've started businesses. They've built homes. They've had children. They've multiplied and so on. And many of them had no memory of the land from which their fathers came.

So they just stayed there. But out of the 50,000 that returned, they have been known and are still known as the post-exilic people.

That is, after the exile, they've returned home. And of the 12 minor prophets, three of them, Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi, those three will be prophesying to the nation of Judah after the exile.

And that's where Zechariah opens. So the people have returned to the land, many of them. Jeremiah, or Nehemiah is busily engaged in rebuilding the wall.

[7 : 00] And the governor, because they do not have a king, the governor will be Zerubbabel and he will be in charge politically and militarily. So Israel is going to dwell without a king.

And by the way, we will not go there, but I want to remind you of a passage that we saw earlier in Hosea that said that the children of Israel will abide many days without a sacrifice, without a priest, without ephod, without a king, and that's where they are now.

Israel has no king. They have no kingdom. Israel today as a nation is a kind of like a democratic republic, similar to what the United States is.

They do not have a king at all. There is no monarchy. They have a prime minister and they have a Knesset that serves much like our Congress. So Israel has never had a king since Zedekiah, the last king.

And I just want to make this one point before we get into Zechariah because this is really, really important. So, in lasting all of these years without a monarchy, you remember it started, the Davidic kingdom, the Davidic house of David started when Saul was taken out and David came to the throne.

[8 : 25] Then every king, every king after David that came to the throne was out of the loins of David, had royal blood in them.

This is the tribe of Judah. And with Zedekiah, it ended. So they've never had a king since. And this is the, this is the period of time where Israel is dwelling, as I mentioned, in Hosea, without a king, without a prince, without an ephod, without a sacrifice.

The temple's torn down, the altar's gone, they cannot worship Judaism like they used to. That's all done. And they are still in that today. They are still in that position. And this is why it was so strategic when John the Baptist came on the scene and began preaching and his message was, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And what that meant was, that kingdom that had been cut off and the kingship that had been cut off with Zedekiah, John the Baptist is saying, it's coming back.

And when Jesus was introduced as the Messiah, the king of Israel, the question is, is he the legitimate successor to Zedekiah, who was the last king that Israel had years and years before?

[9 : 59] So they've been without a king all this time. And this is the burning issue when Jesus came on the scene is, is he the king of Israel?

And you'll know he was introduced as a king. Pilate, when he questioned him, said, so, you are a king? And Jesus said, thou hast said.

In other words, yes, I am a king. But he was a king that was never installed because Israel did not accept him as their king. Remember when David first came to the throne a thousand years earlier?

When David first came to the throne, he ruled only over Judah. And the other ten tribes would not acknowledge his kingship.

And that went on for seven years. and eventually they came around and then David became the king of the whole twelve tribes and his reign would extend for thirty three more years for a total of forty years before he passed off the scene.

[11 : 10] So, guys, I want you to keep in mind what I've said and tie with that the question that the apostles asked Jesus at the time he was ready to ascend recorded in the last chapter of the Gospels and in the first chapter of the book of Acts.

Remember that question they asked him. Lord, is it at this time are you now going to restore the kingdom to Israel?

What an electric question. And Jesus said, it is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the father had put in his own power.

So, this kingdom that they are looking to be restored that they've been without, without a king for all these years, who is the next legitimate person to sit on the throne of David if the royal line in Israel were established, the prime minister removed, and they set up a monarchy again, how would Israel determine who that next legitimate king would be after all of these hundreds of years without a king?

Who would it be? It would be Yeshua HaMashiach, the only legitimate one who is the son of David, and the line ends with him because he had no wife and he had no children.

[12 : 40] So, Jesus is not only the perpetuation of the line, he is the end of the line as the son of David. And remember when he came into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, what were people saying?

Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. Hail to thee, son of David. They recognized that he was out of that royal line. So, keeping all of those things in mind, let us open now if we may with Zechariah chapter 1.

We'll be in this book for a while. It is just loaded with prophecy, a lot of visions and symbols. In fact, the book is going to start off with eight, excuse me, with eight, eight, count them, eight different visions that Zechariah is going to have in one night.

That's a pretty full plate. And each of those visions has real significance. We'll do our best to unravel them as we get into them. But for the introduction, let's look at Zechariah chapter 1 and verse 1.

In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, now remember, Darius is one of the Medes and Persians. He is the ruler now. The Babylonians have been conquered and put out of power.

[13 : 57] The second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, saying, and let me just inject one other thing here.

This can be a little confusing because as you read the Bible, there are 27 different men named Zechariah.

So it's kind of easy to confuse them. And one of the things that is helpful is that we have his grandfather mentioned here that kind of separates him from the other Zechariahs.

He is Zechariah the prophet. He is the son of Berechiah. But there's always the possibility with 27 Zechariahs, another one could have a father called Berechiah.

So, there is another one added and that is the son of Iddo, saying, and just bear in mind, guys, that the Hebrew, the Hebrew does not have a word for grandfather or grandson.

[15 : 07] It always uses the word father or son. Many times when the scriptures refer to someone being their father, it doesn't always mean just the preceding generation.

That's the way we use the term. When we talk about our father, we're talking about the man who begat us. But when the scriptures use the term the father or the fathers, it may go all the way back and often does to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

They are referred to as the fathers. They are the patriarchs. They are the original three for the nation of Israel.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And when Jesus said, as he scolded the Pharisees, he said, which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?

He wasn't talking about their immediate father. He's talking about their ancestors and the persecution that they heaped upon different prophets as they rose up. So keep that in mind.

[16 : 15] He is the son of Berechiah, the son of Ido, or we could say, for our understanding, the grandson son of Ido. The Lord was very angry with your fathers.

And he is referring to, I believe, the fathers that preceded their captivity. He had sent prophet after prophet, and if you read the book of Jeremiah especially, he ministered to the two tribes in the south, Judah, you will see how Jeremiah repeatedly, year after year after year, warned the Jews, listen, what happened to your sister ten tribes?

The northern ten tribes carried off into Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C. Same thing is going to happen to you here in Judah.

Jerusalem, the beloved city, if you don't get your act together, God is going to bring judgment upon you, and he's going to use a heathen nation that doesn't even have a connection with him to take you to the woodshed.

And they scathed Jeremiah, they ridiculed him, they mistreated him, they tore up his scroll, burned it in the fire, they put him in a pit where he was in mud and mire up to his waist, they mistreated him in every which way, but Jeremiah's prophecy came true, and when he was preaching they accused him of being a traitor, and that God would never allow something like that to happen.

[17 : 57] We are the chosen people! And what Jeremiah is saying exactly, and because you are the chosen people, you have additional light, additional information, and you have additional accountability, and if you think God is going to let you get away with sin and idolatry, just because you're the chosen people, you've got another thing coming.

He's going to chasten you, he's going to chastise you, he's going to punish you, because you are his chosen people, because unto whom much is given shall from him much be required. So when he says here, the Lord was very angry with your fathers, he's talking about that crowd in Israel, in Judah, in Jerusalem that's going to be carried away.

Therefore, say to them, thus says the Lord of hosts, return to me, declares the Lord of hosts, that, or so that, I may return to you, says the Lord of hosts.

Very simple formula, very powerful, very needy, and what Zechariah is pleading for is the same thing that Jeremiah pleaded for.

And by way, listen guys, Jeremiah delivered his pronouncements before the captivity. Zechariah is delivering his after the captivity, and they've returned home.

[19 : 29] So the spanking is over. The chastisement is over. What's the problem now? Same thing. And here's the key that you never want to forget.

repentance is incumbent upon every generation. And this is a new generation. This is a later generation than the one that's been carried into captivity.

These are their children, and repentance is incumbent upon them. And when he says return, the return is a reconnection with not just lip service, like Jesus said, these people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

That was the problem here that Zechariah is addressing. And what he is calling them to is to return to the Lord. And fellas, this is such a simple, but a very, very important principle.

And that is, this has nothing to do with what we would call personal salvation. This has everything to do with their reconnecting with the covenant relationship that God had established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they had strayed from it.

[20 : 49] When people, let me put it this way, he is calling them to repentance, and it is one of the most misunderstood words even in the Christian community. Because, guys, repentance is for Christians, not just the unsaved.

You never outgrow your need for repentance. And that's what he is calling them to. And the repentance, he's saying, you return to me so that I may return to you.

Now, what this is all about is volition and response. When he is saying, you return to me, he is demanding that they exercise their will, their volition.

He is calling upon them to do what they are capable of doing, and that is the use of your will to place yourself in a right relationship with God.

You may do that, or you may refrain. And right now, these people are refraining. So, God is saying, the offer is there, it has been, the hand is stretched out all day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people, but God created us as human beings with a power of choice, that is with a volition, and he is appealing to them to exercise their volition, and if you do, this is all about response.

[22 : 20] God has given them information, what's your response to it? And if your response is positive, guess what? God, you use your will and you return to the Lord and he will respond to your response, and he will return to you.

So, he is saying, Israel, the ball is in your court, what are you going to do? This is a message all throughout the Bible. It's the same message that Peter's going to deliver on the day of Pentecost.

Same thing, exactly. It is calling the people to exercise their will to come into a right relationship with the Lord. And we know in the day of Pentecost, 3,000 did.

But they probably constituted a tiny minority. So, when he says, the Lord was very angry with your fathers, therefore say to them, thus saith the Lord of hosts, return to me, declares the Lord of hosts, that I may return to you.

do not be like your fathers to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, thus says the Lord of hosts, return now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.

[23 : 36] That was the message. And principally, this had to do with idolatry. And fellas, what we need to understand is, anytime, anytime one in their mind and heart, replaces the one true God with a false deity, as these were doing prior to the captivity, they were engaged in idolatry, they had succumbed to the worship of idols and strange gods around them, and whenever we replace the true God with the false God, there is always the consequent behavior that comes from that.

Because the wrong deity and the worship and acknowledgement of the wrong deity invariably results in wrong behavior, wicked, evil behavior.

And as your God is, so goes your life. That's a principle, Old Testament, New Testament, it's the way it is today. And when we make something else the center and the core of our life, even though the Lord may be lurking there in a minor way, we allow something to come in to dominate, control, and take over the core being of our life, whether it is money, pornography, sex, power, whatever it may be, then there will issue from that the consequent behavior that goes with it.

Very simple principle. When God is at the core of your being and you are aligned with Him, then what is produced from that relationship are those things that are pleasing to Him.

This is the difference between walking in the flesh and walking in the spirit. And Christians may cycle back and forth. Think of that. We have that resident seed within us that cannot sin in the person of the Holy Spirit, but we are still creatures of flesh.

[25 : 54] And Paul said if you walk in the spirit, you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. And the implication is if you don't, you will. And we've got a whole host of Christians who are living under the dominion of the flesh.

And their lives are a mess. There's no joy, there's no fulfillment, there's no true happiness, there is enslavement to whatever that thing is that controls them.

And Paul, the apostle, is urging us to be a slave, like he was, a bond slave to Jesus Christ. And when you are, then your life will reflect that in your behavior.

And that's the end game. Joe, what? You mentioned that Christians today need to repent all the time. I don't see it that way.

That was for the Jews, and that was Peter's gospel, his message. But our message is believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Just have faith. And all your sins are forgiven, past, present, and future.

[27 : 02] So we just have to believe and have faith. And nothing added to it, we don't have to do anything else but have faith in Christ that he did this for us. So I don't see what we have to ask any, you know, repentance.

It's already forgiven. It's like something's already happened. Okay, obviously I haven't made myself clear. But let's take a look at that word. Repentance. When the Apostle Paul, when the Apostle Paul was talking to the Ephesian elders, back in Acts, I think, 19, something like that.

Paul said that I have declared unto you, and by the way, he was talking to believers, the elders at Ephesus. He said, I have declared unto you the necessity, the necessity of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

That was Paul's message wherever he went. And the word repent, and why guys, we never outgrow our need for repentance. The word repent, a terribly misunderstood term, even among Christians, I'm sorry to say.

And there are some in the grace community that, I'm convinced, through a sincere misunderstanding, do not appreciate the meaning of the word repent.

[28 : 29] And they think that if you tell people they need to repent of their sin, then you are adding to the gospel, which simply says, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

But if you understand the meaning of the word, repent, and let me break it down for you. The word in the Greek, and I don't have an overhead or anything to spell it out, but if I were to spell it, it would be M-E-T-A, meta, which means in the Greek, which literally means through, through.

We use the word metamorphosis. We use the word metastasize. If someone has a malignant or a cancer that is growing, and the doctor may say, it has metastasized.

What that means is it has spread. It has gone through other tissue. That's the meaning of the word meta, and it's involved in the word metaphor, and a whole host of other words that start out with M-E-T-A.

And the second part of the word, noia, N-O-I-A, would be the way we would spell it in English, means mind. I'm sorry, N-O-I-A, there's a different, depending on how the word is used as a noun or as a verb, et cetera, it could also be N-O-U-S, the same thing, and it means through the mind, and the nous, N-O-U-S, is the mind.

[30 : 08] The meta, noia, meta nous, literally means through the mind, which means it is a processing of information mentally through the mind.

It involves the thinking. And bear in mind, guys, any time the gospel is preached to anyone, in essence, all you are doing is providing information.

You are giving people information about sin, about salvation, about Christ, about His death, about what it means to be saved. You are providing information.

And people take that information in, they hear it, and they process it. They think about it. This is why anyone who comes to faith in Christ always begins with thinking.

There is thinking involved. And you hear the information, you process the information, and then you make a decision based on the conclusion that you reach.

[31 : 19] So when you hear the information, you are a sinner, you are lost, you are undone, but Jesus Christ died for your sin to pay the penalty for your sin. That's information that you're giving to people.

They're thinking about that. I've said so many times, Christianity is a thinking faith. God has given us the apparatus for thinking, for cogitation, for consultation, for processing, for reaching conclusions based on logic, understanding, etc.

These are all wonderful things that God has given us. And we process the information that we have heard about Christ dying for our sins, and our conclusion may be, eh, well, thanks, but no thanks, I'm not interested.

Well, that's the decision you reached. How did you reach that decision? You processed the information, and to you, it didn't make sense.

So you didn't act on it. There is no change of mind. There is information received, but no change of mind.

[32 : 27] Everything remains as it was. This very often happens when someone hears the gospel for the first time. This is why it usually takes repeated exposures to the gospel for it to begin to sink in.

Up until then, it's just like water off a duck's back. In fact, Paul made this statement when he wrote to the Corinthians in the very first chapter. He said, we preach, we preach Christ crucified.

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It, this gospel, this good news, it is the power of God, through faith, through believing, unto salvation.

But how does this come across to most people when they hear it, especially for the first time? What did the Greeks say about this? Now, the Greeks were famous for cogitating information, intellectualism.

They produced all of those famous philosophers. they gathered on the on the the Agora and the marketplace and Mars Hill and debated and everything.

[33 : 38] It was Paul in Acts chapter 17. And how did the gospel of Jesus Christ come across to the super intelligent Greeks? And by the way, yeah, by the way, calling them super intelligent, producing the philosophers, this is the same crowd that had a statue on every street corner and even had one to the unknown God.

And remember the point we've made in the past that man reasons with a warped intellect? Even if you have the advanced intellectual knowledge of the Greek, able to produce all of those philosophers, you still have a warped intellect, a skewed intellect that will enable you to erect a bunch of statues and call them gods.

Isn't that amazing? And how did it come across to the Jew? It's a stumbling block. For the Greeks, they would say, you mean to tell me that a man who was not clever enough to keep himself from being crucified is supposed to be the savior of the world?

You've got to be kidding. That's crazy. Whoever heard of such a stupid thing as that? He couldn't even save himself and he's supposed to save the whole world. It's foolishness.

And the word in the Greek is moria, from which we get the word moron. Moron. And Paul is saying, you know, do you know how the Greeks consider you people who are Christians, who believe in the substitutionary death of Christ for your sins?

[35 : 10] You're a bunch of morons. Take a moron to believe that. And yet, who was the morons? Who was the ones that had all the statues erected to these unknown gods? Who's the real moron?

And how did it come across to the Jews? The word in the Greek is skandalon, from which we get the word scandal. Scandal. How do the Jews regard their savior, their messiah, their king, dying on a Roman cross?

Are you kidding me? What an embarrassment to associate that with the king of Israel? And this is why, fellas, this is why it rubbed them so much when Pilate put on the cross over Jesus, the king of the Jews, the Jews bristled.

And they said, don't write that! Don't write that! Right? He said he is the king of the Jews. Don't make him the king. And Pilate said, listen, what I've written, I've written.

Let it stand. So they regard it as a scandal. And I'm sorry, I've got to break this off because the food is here and I've already lost my audience. Joe? I know you've read the Bible many more times than I have and studied it much more than I have.

[36 : 21] But still in all Paul's letters, you brought out the one time he mentioned repent, but I don't see it any place else. I mean, I still saw these letters that he talks about we have to repent.

Repent. Okay, well, we'll pursue this. We will pursue this. It's not, yeah. It is absolutely simple. Let me put it this way. It is impossible. I want to close with this and I want you to think about this.

It is impossible to exercise faith in Christ without repentance. It can't be done because you have to change your mind.

What was it you were believing in before you came to faith in Christ? What was it? Sinful things. You have to admit you're wrong. The thing of it is before you can come to faith in Christ, you have to change your mind about what it was you believed before.

And maybe it was self-righteousness. Maybe it was your church membership. Maybe it was I'm a nice person. You've got to change your mind about that. You've got to repent about that. And we'll pursue this more, but it's a really important point and we'll pursue it again.

[37 : 30] thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Bye. Bye. Bye.
Bye.