

The Minor Profits

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[0 : 00] We are continuing with a very familiar theme that is found in virtually all of the prophets. It is a cycle that the nation of Israel passes through time and time and time again.

And that cycle has to do with their being in touch and in communion with the one true God, as opposed to the multiple deities that surrounded them that were worshipped by all their pagan neighbors.

And eventually they would succumb to that themselves and fall into idolatry. There was no nation on the face of the earth that had the revelation and the information that this nation had, the nation of Israel.

No one had been so privy to the miraculous intervention on the part of God as the nation Israel. No one had greater reason to believe Him and less reason to not believe Him than the nation of Israel.

Nonetheless, they continually succumbed to idolatry and fell away from the Lord. God would raise up prophets and send them to Him and warn them that they needed to return to Jehovah.

[1 : 18] And if they did not, God, because He loved them, would chastise them, would make them regret their negative decisions toward Him, and He would do so in various ways of judgment, principle one of which was to bring those very pagan neighbors against them, to chastise them, discipline them, and sometimes even enslave them.

God, through the prophets, promised that this would happen time and again, and as is the case in almost every situation, they poo-pooed it, they rebuked the prophets, they denied their message, and eventually what the prophets prophesied came to pass.

God would visit them with judgment and chastisement, and then they would cry out to the Lord for deliverance, and God would raise up and deliver, and we see this pattern repeated time and again, particularly in the book of Judges.

It becomes very apparent there. And God would deliver them again, and they would be grateful, and they would be worshiping the Lord, and then the next thing you know, a couple of generations later, they would fall right back into the same thing.

This is repeated consistently throughout the Old Testament. And the time is going to come when the Lord is going to say, all right, that's enough.

[2 : 41] That's enough. I'm going to set you aside for an indeterminate period of time, and it's going to be a long while before you ever surface again as a nation that was intended to be.

And that's where Israel is right now. They are set aside until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, and then God will fulfill the promise that He made to the ancient fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He will bring them back and put them back on center stage, and God will then wrap up this whole thing called the world as we know it, and He will use the instrumentality of Israel to do it.

So Israel is a very key player. I've often referred to the nation of Israel and the Jewish people as indispensable, indispensable to the plan and program of God.

Now, there are a lot of people who like to think, well, no one and no nation is indispensable to the plan and program of God. But Israel is.

And the reason they are is because God, as a matter of choice, made them indispensable by promising to them the covenant that He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[3 : 58] That will be realized and fulfilled in the new covenant, and we'll see that later on. But in this interim time, they are under divine discipline, under divine chastisement, whereby they have been scattered throughout the whole earth.

And that too, by the way, was part of the prophecy that was delivered where God said, if you do not return to me, I will scatter you throughout all the nations of the earth.

Well, that's where they are. They're still scattered. But, as we will see the theme of the prophets repeated, there is a regathering that is promised. Because all of this, fellas, points to one basic thing.

And that is, even though the nation Israel is untrue and unfaithful to God who called them, God does not respond with an unfaithfulness of His own.

And that sets Him so far apart from humanity. God is a God who keeps His promises. And He made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and to their seed.

[5 : 02] And He will fulfill them. Because His integrity is at stake. So, God is going to make good on all that He has promised to Israel.

But, they're going to pay a tremendous price. And you know, you need to keep in mind, fellas, what I've said about Israel is essentially true of humanity in general. Because in many ways, Israel is like a microcosm of the whole human race.

We all enter into this thing called fallenness that was transmitted from our first parents to every generation that succeeded. And we are all cursed with this thing. And we have got implanted within us a terminal disease.

and it's called death. And it is a result of sin. And the soul that sins it shall surely die. But Jesus Christ made plans to reverse that and He has done exactly that through the death, burial, and resurrection of Himself.

And it is a marvelous thing. So, all of the Bible is about all of the Bible is a story of redemption. It begins with paradise, garden, everything is wonderful.

[6 : 14] Then the next thing you know, the paradise is lost. And then, in the end, the paradise is regained. And that is the story of the Bible in a nutshell from Genesis to Revelation.

The whole theme is one of redemption. And we won't go there, but it is spelled out in Revelation chapter 4 where God is praised for being the Creator.

And in Revelation chapter 5, God is praised for being the Redeemer. and He has bought back that which was lost. So, this is a cycle that Israel has been in and it is kind of in keeping with the whole of the human race.

There's a hymn that was written, prone to wander. Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love.

Here's my heart. Oh, take and seal it. Seal it for thy courts above. That is the picture of humanity. And even those who are believers, we have that proneness to wander because the thing with which we are cursed called sin most frequently represents itself in self-centeredness.

[7 : 30] And self-centeredness of humanity coupled with the influence of the adversary is the reason the world is in the mess that it's in today.

And we need to understand that. So, this prophet Zephaniah is raised up to be a warning to the nation of Israel which, of course, they will not heed.

They will not heed. And as the prophet goes on, well, let's just jump in if we may with chapter 2 and verse 4 because this is a new part of the section.

And he says, Gaza will be abandoned and Ashkelon a desolation. Ashdod will be driven out at noon and Ekron will be uprooted. And what is it with all of these towns?

What are they all about? And by the way, virtually all of the enemies of Israel, their neighbors that surrounded them, were all distant relatives. Distant relatives of Israel.

[8 : 33] And fellas, this place here in the Bible where we're talking about in the Mideast is where all this action began and it is where all of this action is going to conclude.

It won't be in New York and it won't be in Moscow. It's going to be in the Middle East. So keep your eyes on it. And by the way, how long has it been since the Mideast has not been a boiling pot of some kind?

These people are always going at it. What's going on right now in Syria? Same thing. In Iran? Same thing. In Iraq? Same thing. In Lebanon? Same thing. All of this is the hotbed of the world and it is the bullseye for satanic activity.

And he knows that this part of the world is strategic to the plan and program of God and he infiltrates and involves himself in any and every way he can.

So all of these cities that are mentioned here, these towns, these are all belonging to the Philistines. The only one that's missing, in fact, we've got... And by the way, this Gaza is the very same geography we're talking about today.

[9 : 46] This is the Gaza Strip that is just south of Israel. It's between Israel and Egypt and you go through Gaza to get to Egypt when you go from Israel.

And this is where there are, what, over a million Palestinians that are located right now there in Gaza and they are the ones who launched the rockets over into Israel and this has been going on for a long time.

So, Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, Ashdod, all of these belong to the five Philistine cities.

The only one that's missing here is Gath. And Gath was the hometown of Goliath, an original kind of Philistine and they were, of course, the enemies of Israel way back when they still are.

And he says, Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethites, the word of the Lord is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines, and I will destroy you so that there will be no inhabitants, so the seacoast will be pastures with caves for shepherds and folds for flocks and the coast will be for the remnant of the house of Judah.

[11 : 00] They will pasture on it in the houses of Ashkelon. They will lie down at evening. If I'm not mistaken, I think there is a modern city in Israel today by that same name.

Ashkelon is built upon the ruins or very close to the ancient city of Ashkelon. For the Lord their God will care for them and restore their fortune.

He's talking about Israel. I have heard the taunting of Moab and the revilings of the sons of Ammon. What's that all about? Moab is where Ruth was from.

Ruth was one of the direct ancestors of our Lord Jesus Christ because she's going to be married to Boaz. And this Ruth was a Moabitess. And Ammon here, you may recall the name of Ammon.

A-M-M-A-N. It is the capital of Jordan today. And if you fly into Jordan, you're going to land at the airport at Ammon. This Ammon is Ammon.

[12 : 04] It's just a little bit different spelling. And the original Ammon, A-M-M-O-N, was one of the sons that was born from the relationship of Lot with one of his daughters.

And one of them was named Ammon, and the other one was named Moab. And these are descendants of those two boys that had that, that were the result of that incestuous relationship with Lot when he fled from the city of Sodom.

Remember, and the wife was turned into a pillar of salt. These are descendants of theirs. And who was Lot? Lot was a blood relative of Abraham.

Lot was Abraham's nephew. It was his brother's boy. So this is all tied together, and these people are all relatives. Someone says, this is why these people fight so much. They're family.

They're just in this thing together. And most of the enemies that Israel had from the time they came out of Egypt were distant relatives of theirs. And you would think that people would be able to get along a little better just by being relatives, but we know the story of that.

[13 : 20] So, he's talking about the taunting of Moab and the revilings of the sons of Ammon with which they have taunted my people. And whenever God says my people, he always means just one particular group.

And that's Israel. And whenever God says my land, he's always talking about the same land. And that's the land of Israel. They have taunted my people and become arrogant against their territory.

Therefore, as I live, declares the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, surely Moab will be like Sodom and the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah.

This is not good news. This is saying that their lot is going to be very negative. A place possessed by nettles and salt pits and a perpetual desolation.

The remnant of my people will plunder them and the remainder of my nation will inherit them. Now, we do have some difficulty here establishing exactly what the time frame of this fulfillment is going to be.

[14 : 28] But there is no question that it will not be the nation of Israel in general that is going to be such a major player in the end time.

but what it is going to be is the remnant of Israel. The percentage of Israel that is left because you've got to remember in the tribulation period how many of the Jewish people worldwide are going to be destroyed.

Two thirds. Two thirds of the entire Jewish population on the planet are going to be destroyed at the hands of the Antichrist whose intent is to destroy the entire nation of Israel.

And by the way if you even just follow the secular news how many times has Iran issued the public threat to wipe Israel off the face of the map.

And that is the intent of those who oppose Israel. This is anti-Semitism on steroids. And this is exactly the attitude that most of these people in the Mideast you see.

[15 : 48] Israel Israel as a nation is surrounded by enemies on every side. Every side. The only friendly side to Israel is the Mediterranean Sea.

Everything else is hostile to Israel and they have been for centuries. No. Make that millennia. This has been a source of conflict. And by the way I want to say this because I want it to be on the record.

Make no mistake about it the adversary Satan himself is perpetually stirring this pot in the Mideast because he knows how strategic it is and he wants to negatively influence destroy deceive everything and as much as he can every time he can while he is involved.

And that is his game plan. It is to thwart the plan and program of God. What Joe? Because that's the only way he can defeat God. That's right. You can't get at God. You can't get at God.

You can't reach him. So you reach those who are closest to him. You reach those that he cares about the most. And that's Israel and the believer. The Christian.

[17 : 03] Every Christian even though he doesn't realize it. Every Christian has a big old bullseye right on their back. We are all targets for the adversary.

And this is why Paul says what he does about we are not ignorant of his devices and be on guard. Be vigilant. Your adversary the devil walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

And he devours with deception and deceit. And he is very, very good at it. So let us continue on now. And when he uses the phrase here the remnant of my people will plunder them.

The remainder of my nation will inherit him. The remainder and the remnant both speak of a tiny group of survivors. And I mean tiny in comparison to the whole nation of Israel.

These will be major players in the end time. These are those of whom I have said in the past in my opinion will be quartered there at Petra and they will be supernaturally fed and protected in the same way that God fed and protected the Israelites when they came out of Egypt.

[18 : 15] Because one of the chief things that will characterize this tribulation period is the return of the miraculous so that it will be obvious.

And Israel in that tiny remnant is going to be the objects of the miraculous care and provision of God while the Antichrist will be trying to get at them and finish them off but he will be unable to do so.

And this remnant will be very very strategic. And by the way the remnant will be completely converted to Yeshua HaMashiach.

These will be the ones who in great repentance will say what Zechariah prophesied chapter 12 and I think verse 7 that they this remnant will look upon him whom they pierced that is whom the nation pierced whom their forefathers pierced and they will mourn for him.

This will be the remnant of Israel's national repentance. Remember Jesus said when he walked out of the temple the last time he said you will not see me again until you say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord and that's exactly what the remnant will be saying.

[19 : 48] This remnant will be weeping and repenting and shedding tears of regret and remorse over their ancestors having crucified the Messiah and they will beg and plead for God to send him back and he does.

And Revelation describes it in chapter 19 and Jesus foretold it in Matthew 24 in the Olivet Discourse and boy it is going to be something.

This will be the culmination of it all. So that's the remnant of my people will plunder them the remainder of my nation will inherit them. This they will have in return for their pride because they have taunted and become arrogant against the people of the Lord of hosts.

He's talking about these surrounding nations here. The Lord will be terrifying to them for he will starve all the gods of the earth and you'll notice that gods is small g because they're not real gods at all or God at all.

And all the coastlands that's those mentioned earlier of the nations will bow down to him everyone from his own place. These will be people who will eventually walk away and turn away from Allah and recognize him to be nothing more than the Baals and the Moleks and the Dagon and the other false gods but that time is yet future.

[21 : 22] You also O Ethiopians will be slain by my sword and what will that sword be? That's the Revelation 19 that is the sword that proceeds from the mouth of God from the mouth of Christ when he returns and that sword is nothing more than his spoken word.

This is the same one that will speak the world's into existence. He will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria and he will make Nineveh a desolation parched like the wilderness and flocks will lie down in her midst all beasts which range in herds both the pelican and the hedgehog will lodge in the tops of her pillars birds will sing in the window desolation will be on the threshold for he has laid bare the cedar work this is devastation with a capital D this is the exultant city which dwells securely who says in her heart I am and there is no one besides me kind of reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar is not this great Babylon which I have builded and that's when the Lord said that's enough on your knees and Nebuchadnezzar was reduced to animal like behavior and mentality for seven years until he learned that it is the most high who reigns in heaven what a time that was that's all what Jonah is about or this is the exultant city which dwells securely who says in her heart

I am and there is none besides me how she has become a desolation a resting place for beasts everyone who passes by her will hiss and wave his hand in contempt now going to turn the page here as it were because the emphasis shifts from all of the enemies of Israel to Israel itself now now Zephaniah says it's time to do business with those people who among all peoples of the earth should know better but still rebelled against the Lord woe to her who is rebellious and defiled the tyrannical city she heeded no voice she accepted no instruction this is her attitude toward all of the prophets that God sent to her to warn her of the destruction that was impending if they did not repent and return to the

Lord but would they listen not on your life instead of softening their hearts they hardened their hearts and once again it could be said of Israel that they are a disobedient and gainsaying people stiff neck people a stiff neck is one that will not allow the head to be turned and the metaphor of course has to do with changing one's behavior as a result of repentance and so on she accepted no instruction she did not trust in the Lord she did not draw near to her God her princes within her are roaring lions her judges are wolves at evening these should have been those possessed with leadership and integrity and honesty and instead Zephaniah is saying they're at the core of the problem they are at the seat of the problem they are the leadership that is corrupt they leave nothing for the morning her prophets are reckless treacherous men these are the kind of prophets that were the prophets of Baal that Elijah did combat with destroyed the what 450 of them remember that at Mount

Carmel these were the kind of prophets you see Israel through its history has had false prophets and true prophets and the time is coming when there will be the ultimate false prophet and he will be the third member of the unholy trinity Satan will be the counterpart of God the Father the Antichrist will be the counterpart of Jesus Christ and the false prophet will be the counterpart of the Holy Spirit and these false prophets deliver of course a false message and they lure the people into complacency into safety etc and they were the ones who prophesied who rebelled against Jeremiah when Jeremiah would deliver his indictment and his prophecy of what was coming and they would poo poo Jeremiah and say this guy's got it all wrong God will not allow that to happen blah blah blah and on they were false prophets and we are told our Lord said in the latter days there will be false prophets that will arise and will deceive many and they will be the henchmen of the adversary this is all coming well they leave nothing for the morning her prophets are reckless treacherous men her priests have profaned the sanctuary they have done violence to the law the Lord is righteous within her he will do no injustice every morning he brings his justice to light he does not fail but the unjust knows no shame when a person is so evil and so contorted in their thinking that they are incapable of being shamed or embarrassed because of their behavior they've sunk to a new low and let me tell you something we have got

[27 : 26] Washington D.C. that is packed to the gills with people who do not have a capacity for shame or embarrassment they can tell flat outright lies that they know to be lies and look you in the face and not bat an eye and fellas there is a huge huge difference between misleading the public because when a politico and it's got nothing to do with democrat or republican it's across the board when a politico tells the public something that he really believes himself to be true but it isn't true he misleads the public because of what he thought was true but wasn't and he said it in good faith but that's misleading the public and that's one thing that is excusable because sometimes the facts of a matter do escape us and we think we have the truth and we speak what we think is the truth but it isn't true at all and it isn't found out until later that's misleading the public but that's an entirely different ball game than just flat out lying to the public and when you lie to the public you know it is a lie when you speak it but you speak it anyway because of the effect you hope it will have that it will convince a number of people even though it isn't true and the objective is they will act on that information particularly at the polling place this is the way it works so all of this is coming down

I have cut off nations the corner towers are in ruins I have made their streets desolate with no one passing by their cities are laid waste without a man without an inhabitant I said surely you will revere me accept instruction so her dwelling will not be cut off according to all that I have appointed concerning her but they were eager to corrupt all their deeds no repentance dug in their heels defied the Lord and all of this is bad news judgmental but there is good news coming and the good news is so wonderful that it actually outstrips and outweighs the bad news so we see here a pattern you know the thing that makes the good news good is that the bad news is bad but the good news is always contrasted with the bad news and next week we'll conclude

Zephaniah and it is glorious with the good news the restoration and the bringing back that God's going to affect