

Introduction to the Minor Prophets

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[0 : 00] Okay. Okay. Today is kind of a different day. In Sunday school this morning, we introduced the book of Hebrews.

! We introduced the book of Hebrews. We introduced the book of Hebrews. We introduced the book of Hebrews.

Yeah. Anybody know why they're minor? Because they're small books. Yeah. It's not because the message is like, who cares?

But it's just because they're somewhat smaller in length. But we're going to be taking a look at these. And there's 12 of them. So hopefully we'll be able to get through them all this year.

I was going to run through them all in 12 weeks. And Frank slapped me up alongside the head with a cold salmon and said, take your time. So this is probably going to comprise the last 12 years of my ministry. No, we'll get through them in a decent amount of time.

[1 : 08] But to begin with, I'd encourage you to open your Bibles to 2 Timothy. I know the minor prophets are in the Old Testament and 2 Timothy is in the New.

I discovered that this week. But I want to start off in 2 Timothy if I can find it in my Bible. There it is. 2 Timothy, chapter 4.

The Apostle Paul is writing to Timothy as Timothy is ministering to people.

And the Apostle Paul is trying to encourage him and challenge him. And he says this, Preach the Word. Be ready in season and out of season.

Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

[2 : 24] As for you, always be sober-minded. Endure suffering to the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry. Now, I want to start off with this because the minor prophets don't often get preached.

The minor prophets are oftentimes overlooked. People like stories from the Gospels, you know, Peter and Jesus walking on the water and Peter going for a swim.

They like to hear stories of God smiting the unrighteous and lifting up the righteous. They like the action-packed Gospels and, you know, those Old Testament histories.

The prophets sometimes... Well, let's be honest. If you're reading the prophets, there's weird stuff that happens in there. There's a guy who, by order of the Lord, walked around naked for three years.

Yeah. That wouldn't go over well here, would it? Yeah. We did Elijah the other, you know, where he was...

[3 : 38] Ezekiel, sorry. Where he spent how many months building a model city and breaking it up to show the destruction coming to Jerusalem? He spent how many times laying on one side and then rolling over and laying on the other?

You run into weird things in the prophets. But the minor prophets, the minor prophets, they're part of the Word of God. They challenge us.

They instruct us. And they encourage us. And I want to spend some time going through them because they need to not be neglected.

They need to be brought forward and center. And they're going to challenge us today with the truths that were written a little while ago. As we take a look today at the introduction to the minor prophets, I want you to know this.

That God's Word not only instructs us, it challenges us and it equips us. Instruction. This is what truth is.

[4 : 47] You know, this is right, this is wrong. I know you want to do that, but that ain't good. I know that's hard, but that's what you need to be doing. That's instruction. It challenges us.

Time to grow up. Time to put God first. Time to stop being childish. That's challenging sometimes. I like sitting down being lazy.

Can I get an amen? You know, hard work is hard. You know, going out and doing things that are difficult is difficult. But God's Word challenges us.

But it also equips us. It gives us the tools necessary. It teaches us how to do what we've been instructed and challenged to do.

And so I'm going to give you a brief overview of a couple of things with the minor prophets today.

And, well, it's, what I'm going to be looking at are, well, let's just start with this.

[5 : 51] The prophets are not priests. Okay? There's a big difference between being a prophet of God and being a priest of God. Namely, the prophets were tapped by God.

You would be out there tending your sheep or hoeing your corn or, I don't know, weaving your baskets. And God would go, hello, I have a message that I want you to tell the people.

And it was really kind of different, unusual. They call that the call. God would call prophets. Versus priests, priests were priests by birth.

Hey, if you're the son of Levi in a certain tribe, guess what? You get to work in the temple all your life. You know? If you were a special, narrow sect, you actually got to work in the Holy of Holies.

But if you were just one of the, you know, offshoot cousins, you got to spend all day sweeping the temple. Okay? That's just by the way you were born. But priests, priests had the job of teaching the people of Israel what the word of God said.

[6 : 58] Prophets were chosen by God to bring a special word at a special time. And so what we're looking at today and for the next couple of months are not priests, but prophets.

Men chosen by God, many of them just everyday people to bring God's word at a critical time. There's five things that are consistent.

Five things that are true with each of the prophets. God has a message. God wants to be in relationship. Though some people are faithful, most people are rebels.

God is going to judge sin. But He has also promised a time of renewal. And so what we're going to do today is we're going to just briefly hit on these five things.

And we're going to see through the next coming months, these five themes are going to echo again and again. But I want to start with this first one. God has a message for the people.

[8 : 09] 2 Timothy 3, verse 16 says this, All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

So all Scripture, including the prophets, including the histories, including the poetic, all of this is given by God.

And it is profitable to teach, correct, instruct, and reprove. In fact, if we ignore any portion of Scripture, we're ignoring God's special message for us.

And so it's important for us to spend time dealing with all of it. I want to take a look at 2 Peter 1, verse 21. It says this, I'm in 1 Peter, and that ain't going to cut it for me.

I want to be in 2 Peter. That looks much better. No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

[9 : 29] So what we're going to be taking a look at over the next couple of months are not man's ideas. It's not some guy had a really bad cup of chili and got indigestion and said, ooh, I'm going to say this.

It wasn't that at all. But God moved men to say what they're going to say for the purpose of His will.

And finally, Apostle Paul in Romans 15, 4 says this, For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope.

I know that the minor prophets, I mean, most of us can't even name them. I mean, unless you've memorized the books of the Bible and you start at the right place and go to the right place, it's hard even naming all of the prophets.

But they were given not just to them, but the Apostle Paul says they were given for us.

And they are given so that we would not only know what to do, but it ends here with what? That we might have hope.

[11:00] For what was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope.

So, God has a message for people. God chooses to be in relationship. This is...

Anybody here know the President of the United States? We all know his name, right? But do you know him personally?

How many of you have ever shook hands with the President of the United States? Any President of the United States? One? Which President? No, I have not. Oh, you have not.

Anybody here shaking hands with the President of the United States? How about a Vice President? I have. Yeah. And only because I have a friend that worked for him.

[11:58] Okay? We don't know these people. They don't want to know us. They've got other responsibilities. They're not going to... But God, who is greater than all, wants a relationship with each one of us, which, given the circumstances, is amazing.

Do you guys remember what happened in Genesis 3? Eve screwed it all up, didn't she? It's all her fault, right? Yeah. Okay, good.

As long as we're... Genesis 3 is where Adam and Eve sin. And do you remember what happens immediately after they sinned? God in heaven opened up his computer and hit the smite button. Large bolt of lightning came down, blasted them into smithereens, and God made a new couple. Right? Isn't that what happened? No? No.

If we turn to Genesis 3, what do we read? After Adam and Eve sinned, and they realized that they had done wrong, and they went and hid themselves, God shows up to have a conversation with them.

[13:06] And he goes walking down. And the first thing, he wasn't... He didn't walk right up to the bush there and say, I know you're in there, and I know you sinned. That wasn't it at all. God engaged them in a conversation.

Now, it did end up with God condemning their sin, but we'll get to that later. The important thing is that God sought them out for a relationship.

Do you remember Genesis chapter 12? Go ahead and turn there. Turn to Genesis chapter 12. I want to look at this one real quick. Because this one emphasizes even more what's going on. Genesis chapter 12. All of humanity is spread out, but God reaches out and establishes a relationship.

Now, the Lord said to Abram, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house. This is supposed to be God reaching out, and he says, I will make you a great nation.

[14:07] I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. Verse 3. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

God wants to be in relationship with people. God's not confused. He's not ignorant. God's not living under a rock.

He knows that there are good guys and there's bad guys. But he wants to be in relationship with everybody. God's not living under a rock.

In fact, in the Gospel of John, chapter 1, he says this. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. Look, it doesn't matter who you are.

[15:19] Tall, short, wide, thin, incredibly wealthy, incredibly poor. It doesn't matter if you've got halitosis or if you've got gold teeth.

It doesn't matter if you speak a different language. It doesn't matter if you look a different way. It doesn't matter who you are. But if you turn to God in faith, he gives you his name.

He brings you into his family. So the first thing that we're going to learn about as we go through the book of the Minor Prophets is that God has a message for people.

God's got something. He's got a conversation he wants to meet. The second thing is God doesn't turn people away. He wants to be in relationship.

He wants to establish that bond. Then thirdly, though some people are faithful, all right?

[16:26] Now let's be honest. God, there's this idea throughout the prophets of the remnant. The remnant are those individuals who have faithfully went after God.

And while there's a remnant, most of the people do what? They do evil. They turn away from God.

And so the prophets are, as we read through these prophets, they're going to talk about, yes, there are those faithful remnant. There are those people that love God. But then there's everybody else. You guys remember the story of Noah, right? Genesis chapter 6. I know we're all over the place today. We're actually not going to spend a lot of time in the prophets.

I'm just kind of laying out some things. But in Genesis chapter 6, you've got, where is it? Verse 6, verse 9. It says this. These are the generations of Noah.

[17:27] Noah was a righteous man. Part of the remnant. Blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. What an incredible thing, right?

Here was Noah, a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Look at verse 11. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight. So we get this picture.

There's this one guy who's got these three kids, and he's righteous, and those guys are okay. And then you've got everybody else going the wrong way. It wasn't any different in the time of the prophets.

You had these few people that were standing up for God, and everybody else going the other way. Is it any different today?

There's a few people that are sold out, that are living for the Lord, and everybody else is going the other way.

[18:35] Think of the pressure Noah had to do what was right, and everybody else trying to convince him to go do something else.

It's not hard. We live in that world today. Well, we know what's right, and we have pressure all over us to go the other way.

Take a look, if you will, in Micah. This is one of the minor prophets. So we're going to take a look at Micah. If you find the book of Matthew, go left.

Go left. If you find the book of Psalms, go right. It's on page 872 in my Bible. Does that help you out? Micah.

Micah chapter 6. He has shown you, O man, well, let me start in verse 6.

[19:46] With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with the thousands of rams, with ten thousands rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O man, what is good and what does the Lord require of you?

To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. God has told us that God has called us to do.

Contrast that with verse 12. Your rich men are full of violence, your inhabitants speak lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

God has told us what is required. He has shown us the right way, but so many people are going the wrong way. And that's one of the things that the minor prophets address.

[20:58] And then there's this, the fact that God will judge sin. Throughout the prophets, it's talked about as the day of the Lord.

The day of the Lord. The day of the Lord will come. The day of the Lord is not a good thing. Evil will be crushed on the day of the Lord. On the day of the Lord, the faithful will be rewarded.

The day of the Lord will come like a cosmic hurricane through the planet. Isaiah.

This is not a minor prophet. This is one of the big prophets. It's a really long one. We're only going to read a little bit. Isaiah chapter 2. Oops.

12 through 17. For the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up, and it shall be brought low.

[22:04] Against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up, against all the oaks of Bashan, against all the lofty mountains, against all the uplifted hills, against every high power, and against every fortified wall, against all the ships of Tarshish, against all the beautiful craft, against the haughtiness of man.

The haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

This is referring to the day of the Lord, and it's using what's called cosmic poetry. Cosmic poetry.

What did the cedars of Lebanon, those are just trees, right? And yet it says that the day of the Lord, it will come against them. It will come against the lofty mountains, against the uplifted hills.

This is poetic language. But look what it says in 17. And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled. See, the day of the Lord is not a good day.

[23 : 20] It's not the sort of day that you're all waiting for. You know, you got your barbecue and you're all, no. It's the sort of day you go and hide in. It's a terrible and sad day.

But it's not pointed at you if you are one of the Lord's faithful, if you're part of the remnant. It's pointed at those who turn their nose up at God, who refuse to be instructed, who refuse to listen and humble themselves before God.

On that day, God will break the proud. If you are humble before the Lord, if you are lifting Him up and humbling yourself before Him, and the day of the Lord comes, think about this.

Here you are lifting the Lord up while you're humbling yourself. And this storm comes, and next to you is somebody who doesn't care about God and is lifting themselves up.

Okay? What position are you going to be in? Humbled. What position are they in? Upright and proud. Who's going to get hit? They are.

[24 : 40] You guys ready for an old movie reference? Indiana Jones in the last crusade, when they're going in search of the cup of the Holy Grail, right?

and the penitent man gets by the breath of God and the penitent man is bowed over. Wow. Nobody remembers that movie?

Thank you. I appreciate you. Thank you. One other. So, the idea is if you are humbled before the Lord, when the day of wrath comes, it goes over you versus if you're lifting yourself up in pride, you get smacked.

Oh, I've got to come up with newer illustrations. I'm too old. Quit looking at me like that, Skansen. All right. But they use cosmic poetry.

They talk about mountains and trees and everything, and what they're talking about is you and I and how we live before the Lord. All right. There is a promised renewal.

[25 : 42] Zephaniah. Ooh, that's one we read a lot. I remember the last time I looked up Zephaniah. It was this week. Because I was doing this. Zephaniah.

There it is. Chapter 3, 9 through 13. Here we go. Promised renewal. For at that time, after the day of the Lord, when the haughty had been brought low, at that time, I will change the speech of the people's speech, to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord.

From beyond the rivers of Cush, my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering. On that day you shall not be put to shame, because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me.

for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain. But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly, that shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord.

Those who are left in Israel, they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue, for they shall graze and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

[27 : 18] This is the promised renewal. And you got to understand, God has sent the prophets to confront the people of God who are living in rebellion.

And God wants to know people, He wants to engage people, He wants to be in relationship with them, but sin causes problems. And sin has to be stopped, because sin is not good, and it's bad, and it's an affront to God, and God will judge sin.

And so He brings about the day of the Lord. But after the day of the Lord, God still wants to be in relationship. God wants to lift people up, and He wants to bless them.

And look at this, for at that time I will change speech. God is going to be involved, and here's the thing.

This is the reality that is being addressed here. There are those people who don't care about God at all, and they're going about their lives, and all they're doing is lifting themselves up.

[28 : 30] And then there's those who honestly want to serve the Lord, who honestly want to lift God up, but they still struggle with sin. think about the mirror.

Put that mirror up there. When you look into the mirror, do you see someone who cares about God at all? I certainly hope so. You're here in church, right?

We're here because we love God, and we want to be the people God's called us to be. Amen? Amen. Amen. Thank you. But as I look in the mirror of Pastor Todd, it's not perfect.

Did you know the other day I used a bad word? We used to say in our family, shut up was a bad word. Teaching our kids not to treat others disrespectful.

And so if somebody said shut up, that was a bad word. I said a bad word the other day, shut up. You know? Might have used a couple others. Might have actually done some real sin the other day. [29 : 37] Might have driven without my seatbelt on this week. Might have not honored God through every word and deed. I am a man who has lived his entire life trying to serve the Lord, and yet I get paid to be a godly man.

I get the opportunity to come and study the word of the Lord so that I can share it with people. And when I take a look in the mirror, I go, there's plenty not right with me.

Anybody else have that issue? Not that I have issues. I already know that. I'm talking about you having issues, right? When we look in the mirror, do we see issues in our life, right?

When it says here in Zephaniah chapter 3 verse 9, that time I will change the speech of the peoples, he's not talking about those people who don't care about God.

He's not talking about the people that are arrogant and reject God. He's talking about us. And he's going to remove that struggle for us. No longer when we look in the mirror we're going to be going, dang it, I did it again.

[30 : 45] because God's going to work in us. At that time I will change the speech of the people to a pure speech that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord.

This is the reality that the minor prophets teach us and that we're going to be spending time on. First of all, God wants us to be in relationship with him. Even though we're sinners, even though we have failed him time and time again, God wants to be in relationship with us and he's given us that message.

He's spoken to us and as we're going through life, God's going to remind us that sin is bad and that he is going to deal with it. But as we continue to humble ourselves, perfect or not, in the end, God will lift us up and make us into the men and women that he has called us to be.

And that's the challenge for us that we're going to be finding as we go through the prophets. They teach us about God and how he deals with people.

And here's the thing, all have sinned and fallen short. But today, God makes available repentance. Today, God makes available joining his family.

[32 : 05] When we come to him and we repent, God is going to watch over us, he's going to train us, he's going to teach us. You don't have to be perfect. God loves us.

God calls us to be better. He's going to use his word to shape our hearts and our lives so that we can be more of the men that he's called us to be. And so that's what we're going to be taking a look at in the next couple of weeks and months is how God calls his people to be more, how he deals with those who reject him and how God promises in the end to lift up those who love him.

That's what we're going to be looking at. Let's have a song about how great God