



For January 17th, 2010

Midlothian Bible Church

# Life /n Focus

*Examining Life Through the Lens of Scripture*



*Come Home*

## **MBC Mission Statement:**

*Building God's family by developing intimate followers of Jesus Christ.*

Grow Mature Reproducing Disciples

Raise Christ-centered Families

Adore the Triune God

Communicate Him to our Culture

Express our Faith Globally

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## *Minor Prophets*

### *Introduction*

If you are like most people, at one point or another you have dreamed about being on a TV game show and winning the final round and overflowing jackpot. From Wheel of Fortune to Jeopardy, from Deal or No Deal to The Price Is Right, we guess the answer and chide those who cave under pressure and are booted off the show thinking that we would do so much better if we just had the opportunity. Well, for the next few minutes, we give you that chance. Imagine being on stage in front of a large crowd when the host and camera turn in the direction of your confident buzz on a question not quite finished. As it is given, sweat beads begin to appear on your forehead and you wish some nerdy fifth grader could come to your rescue. The category of Bible Trivia seemed an easy choice for you, a seasoned person of faith who had attended church as long as you could remember. In fact, at the beginning of the show, you credited God for your career and family, and so now in a test of faith, an irritating timer ticks off the seconds as you try to recall the answer. The question? *Name the 12 Minor Prophets in order as they are found in the Old Testament of the Bible.* Ready...Set...Go! Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick...

How would you do? Well, if we are honest, it would be very difficult for us to answer the question in the comfort of a coffee shop let alone on stage in front of a skeptical audience. If we could somehow stumble through the list, we would probably falter at knowing the purpose each of them had for writing what they did. For the next few months, we will revisit the Minor Prophets for more than just familiarity. Since "all Scripture is inspired by God" than it must challenge us to life change in "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness." Before we embark on the journey through these captivating Minor Prophets, there are some key details of the covenants we need to know.

Day One

Understanding the Covenants

Digging Deeper



- o **Important Point:** The salvation passages of the prophets (both Major and Minor) go back to the Davidic and Abrahamic Covenants. The judgment passages, refer to Israel's failure to obey their end of the Covenant with Moses.

Scripture Memory

Lamentations  
3:22-23

*"The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning."*

*New Living Translation*

It is important to hide God's Word in our heart. Each week we will provide a section of verses you can use to enjoy this benefit.

**Tips:**

1. Use a familiar, reader-friendly version.
2. Write the vs. on a 3x5 card. Carry it with you.
3. Repetition is key.
4. Focus on content.

◆ **Introduction:**

↪ A strategic foundation to begin understanding the Minor Prophets is to familiarize ourselves with the covenants God made with his people. Throughout the prophets we hear a recurring theme of judgment and sometimes it is difficult to understand why God would punish his chosen people. In this truth, it is important to remember a fundamental principle: *When God brings judgment, you can be sure it is the last thing he wants to do.* His discipline is rooted in his heart of forgiveness. Ultimately, the reason God brought judgment upon his people but even in this we find God's mercy.

◆ **Study:**

↪ Read **Genesis 12: 1-3, 15: 1-18**. This is the covenant God made with Abraham. What nation is birthed in this promise? Do you think this covenant is conditional or unconditional?

↪ Read **Exodus 19: 1-8, Deuteronomy 27-28**. This covenant is the covenant God made with Moses. What is the covenant contingent upon? What did the people promise to do? Did they?

↪ Read **2 Samuel 7: 11-17**. This is God's covenant with David or the Davidic Covenant. How is this covenant linked to Jesus? (Read Matthew 1). Why is this important?

◆ **Reflect:**

↪ Think of a time when you made an agreement with someone. Who were they? What were the terms of the agreement? How did you enforce them?

↪ What covenant did God make with us as NT believers? Who? How did this covenant come to be? What mercy is found in it? What hope do we have of its security or unconditional promise?

Day Two

The Covenant To Abraham

Digging  
Deeper



o **Melchiza-who?**

One thing we know, he is a ruler who worshipped the true God, known to him as El-Elyon, the possessor of heaven and earth. He blessed Abram and in return Abram gave him a tithe. The author of Hebrews likens Christ to Melchizedek. Why? (Hebrews 6:19 - 7: 28).

o **Request:** “Abram asked for a sign, a supernatural verification that God would indeed fulfill the distant promise. His request shows that he was taking God seriously.”<sup>1</sup>

o **Vv.9,10,17** describe an ancient treaty used to seal a contract between two parties. The parties would walk through the middle of the carcasses declaring that the same thing should happen to the one who breaks the contract. But God walked through alone.

◆ **Introduction:**

↪ As we continue to unpack each of the covenants mentioned yesterday, we have to ask, “What’s in a promise?” If I make a promise to read to my boys or play with them in the yard and don’t fulfill it, what happens? In calling Abram to go from Haran to Canaan, God made him a promise. He promised Abram that he would be a great nation, that he would personally bless him, and that his name would be great. Will God keep his promise? Abram left Haran and began his journey to an unknown place that God would show him. After Abram’s encounter with Melchizedek, God showed up and made a covenant of which his promise in 12:1-3, 7 was a preview.

◆ **Study: Read Genesis 15.**

↪ Why are God’s words to Abram in v.1 significant? How does this affect Abram’s ability to trust (vv.2-3).

↪ What does God do (vv.4-5) and what was Abram’s response (v.6)? Why does God remind Abram of the journey from Ur? Is it important to remember what God has done in the past?

↪ If Abram believed in what God had promised (v.6), why is he now asking the question in v.8? What does he want? How does God respond?

◆ **Reflect:**

↪ Think about it: How good are you at fulfilling your promises? What did you learn about God in this chapter? Abram?

↪ Sing/recite what you know from the hymn, “Great is Thy Faithfulness” and then close in prayer.

Day Three

The Covenant to Moses

Digging Deeper



- **Ancient Treaty:** The Mosaic Covenant’s literary structure is that of the suzerain/vassal treaties common in that era. It contained the *preamble*, the *prologue*, and the *stipulations*. On the basis of the first section, the preamble (*the identity of the suzerain*), and the second section, the prologue (*which indicates what the suzerain has done for the vassal in the past*), the stipulations would state in explicit detail the duties and obligations of the vassal as imposed upon him by the king.
- **The Ten Words:** The Greek word *Decalogue* represents Ex.20:1 well by laying out the ten (*deca*) words (*logos*) of God. These commandments are the general stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant. Ex.20:22-23:33 are the specific stipulations that explain the general stipulations of 20:1-17.
- **Purpose of the Tabernacle:** This is made known in 25:8, “So that I may dwell among them.” What did God dwelling among his people indicate?

◆ **Introduction:**

↪ As Israel’s *protector*, God worked a miracle of deliverance and the people rejoiced (Ex.15). Later they complained, but as their *provider*, he fed them (16) and gave them water to drink (17:1-7). And as their *power* in battle, he defeated the Amalekites (17:8-16). Now, three months removed from their bondage in Egypt, God makes a treaty with Israel conditioned upon one key element.

◆ **Study: Read Exodus 19 - 20, 24:1-8.**

↪ Read the “Ancient Treaty” format in Digging Deeper. Using Ex.19:4-6, how would you apply this three part structure?

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↪ Look at 19:5-6 again. What was the promise made with Moses conditioned upon? What three things did God promise Israel if they held their end of the covenant?

↪ How did the people respond when Moses told them of this treaty?(19:8; 24:7). Did Israel completely obey?

◆ **Study: Read Exodus 24:9 - 25:9**

↪ Who went with Moses up Mt. Sinai to meet with God? Why is this significant? (see 33:11, Deut. 34:9). How long did Moses stay on Mt. Sinai? What did he learn during this time?

↪ Why did God want an offering from a willing heart? (v.2). What was the purpose of the offering?

◆ **Reflect:**

↪ What promises have you made to God that you need to fulfill?

↪ List the 10 Commandments on the back of this page. Which one do you struggle with the most to obey?

Day Four

The Covenant to David

Digging Deeper



- **Goliath:** To learn how God used David as a young boy to save Israel read 1 Samuel 17 and the reason why Saul turned against David and wanted to kill him.
- **A Lasting Promise:** Read the following verses out of 2 Samuel 7 and write down the significant components on the back.

*“...And now the LORD declares that he will build a house for you—a dynasty of king! For when you die, I will raise up one of your descendants, and I will make his kingdom strong. His the one who will build a house—a temple—for my name. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. If he sins, I will use other nations to punish him. But my unfailing love will not be taken back from him as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your dynasty and your kingdom will continue for all time before me, and your throne will be secure forever.” (vv.11-16)*

◆ **Introduction:**

- ↪ As a boy, David’s desire was to honor and please his father. This was the recipe for which God was looking when Samuel walked up the well-worn path to Bethlehem to offer a sacrifice to the LORD.
- ↪ As king, David desired to honor and serve the LORD. As a result, God blessed him and gave him a promise that receives more attention in the Old Testament than any other covenant with the exception of God’s covenant with Moses.

◆ **Study:** Read *1 Samuel 16* and *2 Samuel 6-7*.

- ↪ How many children did Jesse have? Why do you think God didn’t want any of David’s older brothers? Why do you think God want a ruddy young shepherd boy to be anointed as king?
- ↪ What was the real reason for Michal’s contempt for David? What was her pretended reason? (2 Sam.6). What was the Ark of God significant? Where else have we heard about it?
- ↪ How did David try to honor the LORD in chapter 6 and 7:1-3? How did God promise to honor David? (7:4ff).
- ↪ Read David’s prayer thanks to God’s promise. (2 Sam. 7:18ff). What did you learn about God? What does it tell you about David’s trust in him?

◆ **Reflect:**

- ↪ Scripture call David a “man after God’s own heart.” Where is it found? What does it mean? Could this phrase still describe him after our study tomorrow?

Day Five

A New Heart

Digging Deeper



- **End Around:** The ending of the Covenant to Moses does not affect the lasting promises of the Covenants to Abraham and David. The Church does not replace Israel in the New Covenant. Nor is it a parenthetical period in God's dealings with his people. The current expression of the age of grace is the Church. Many will come to faith during end time events, including a remnant of Israel.
- **New Covenant:** Read Luke 22:14-23. What does Jesus say about the new covenant?

Life In Focus © is a weekly sermon-based ministry serving Midlothian Bible Church and is written by Layne A. Mershimer ([mersh@att.net](mailto:mersh@att.net)), Pastor of Adult Ministries. Learning takes place in the context of community, so we encourage you to interact with the lesson and send your questions. Our prayer is that L.I.F. will help you grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

◆ **Introduction:**

↪ As Isaiah prophesied to the northern tribes of Israel before they fell in 722 B.C., Jeremiah prophesied to Judah. Writing both before and following the fall of Jerusalem (the capital of the southern tribe of Judah) in 586 B.C., Jeremiah's writings signifies a serious transition. The old promise of the covenant to Moses is fading away and something new, something lasting is coming written not on tablets of stone. It is on the basis of the covenant covered throughout this week that we begin to look at the Minor Prophets and God's word to those who would be his.

◆ **Study:** Read *Jeremiah 29:1-14, 30:3, 31:23-34*.

↪ What does Jeremiah promise will happen to the people of God after 70 years of captivity? How does the context of 29:11-13, affect your understanding of those verses? What universal principle of God can you apply to your life from these verses?

↪ What is the overall point of chapter 31? What does Jeremiah promise the LORD will give in place of the old Covenant? What is the difference between this covenant and the old?

↪ Read *Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:1-17*. What passages does the author of Hebrews quote from? What does he say regarding the old covenant? How was the old covenant insufficient? How does Christ's sacrifice differ from that of the OT sacrificial system? If it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (10:4), how were the OT believers saved?

◆ **Reflect:**

↪ What hope did Jeremiah's prophecy give those in exile? Who fulfills Jeremiah's prophecy of the New Covenant? What hope do we have in him? Where do you need to "Come Home"?