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Dear Associates and Friends,

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“[The Minor Prophets for Today](#)” is this month’s presentation by Dr. Ernest L. Martin. It is packed with detailed information about the Book of the Twelve, the Minor Prophets. This group of documents is the Word of YHWH passed through twelve different persons. It is to be considered a single book compiled from twelve segments:

“... in these prophetic books we have not only the earliest and latest of the prophetic testimonies concerning the future history of Israel and of the kingdom of God, but the progressive development of this testimony. When taken, therefore, in connection with the writings of the greater prophets, they comprehend all the essentials of that prophetic word, ... causing His servants to foretell, as a warning to the ungodly, the destruction of the two sinful kingdoms, and the dispersion of the rebellious people among the heathen, and, as a consolation to believers, the deliverance and preservation of a holy seed, and the eventual triumph of His kingdom over every hostile power.”

• *Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 10, p. 1*¹

In the order of the Old Testament books first comes the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), then comes the Prophets, then the Writings (Luke 24:44, where Jesus substitutes “Psalms” for Writings). Modern scholars classify the Prophets into “Major Prophets” and “Minor Prophets.” The Major Prophets are the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They are “major” because of their length. The fourth and last of the Prophetic Books is that of the Minor Prophets.

Another classification system is used by traditional Jewish scholars. They divide the same books into two different divisions²:

[1] The “Former Prophets” in two volumes: Joshua-Judges and the Book of the Kingdoms.³

[2] The “Latter Prophets” in four volumes: Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and then twelve “Minor Prophets” in one “book” or scroll.

However they are classified, all books within each division are in a general chronological order. Jeremiah and Ezekiel overlap somewhat in time but not in message: a common call for repentance, a warning of judgment, and a promised and hoped for salvation if the repentance is genuine. It was accomplished around the mid-4th century BC, and most importantly, Jesus and the apostles cite these books as authoritative.

¹ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, vol. 10, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), p. 1.

² See Dr. Martin’s “[Diagram, The Symmetry of the Bible](#)” from his book *Restoring the Original Bible: The Design and Development of the Holy Scriptures*. This book explains the classification in detail as well as why each book is in the position it has within the canon. He also explains how the Old Testament (and the New Testament) canon developed.

³ The Book of Zechariah makes references to these “Former Prophets” in Zechariah 1:4: “**Be you not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying ...**,” Zechariah 7:7: “**Should you not hear the words which YHWH has cried by the former prophets ...**,” and Zechariah 7:12: “**... the words which YHWH of hosts has sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from YHWH of hosts.**”

Study

The Minor Prophets contain great wisdom. They are worthy of your study as a unit. They are worthy of your study as individual prophecies. They are important pieces of literature that fit together to form a larger piece of the framework of the prophetic mosaic of our future. So, how can we study such weighty matters?

It is necessary to study, no matter what level of knowledge and understanding you have. Everything you learn will be an improvement from your current situation. There will be times in life when we all must make decisions about what we believe — about God, about the meaning of life, about our responsibility to others. We make those decisions based on what we have studied and learned. We can never expect to know the answers to all questions. But understand this precisely, before God silence is not an option. Elijah the prophet challenged Israel, which the NET Bible translates idiomatically:

“Elijah approached all the people and said, ‘How long are you going to be paralyzed by indecision? If YHWH is the true God, then follow him, but if Baal is, follow him!’ But the people did not say a word.”

• *1 Kings 18:21, NET Bible*

Today no one follows Baal, but we do follow the world, and some try to follow nothing and make no decisions in life. Following God requires study. As a believer chosen by God, He will not play games with those He has chosen to know His truth. If they do nothing to learn about Him, there will be no reward. At any time He may require us to make choices in life, to follow Him or not. But truly know that man cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). Why do we so often compromise our beliefs?

I have learned that if you stand and state your beliefs, you may have to defend them. To defend them you should be educated about the subject matter. With your present level of education in God’s Word can you defend your beliefs? Why not? How long have you been a Christian — decades?⁴ Study for God’s approval (2 Timothy 2:15). If you stand up for your beliefs (and do so with love, compassion, and understanding) others might listen to you: **“A man has joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!”** (Proverbs 15:23). **“The heart of the righteous studies to answer”** (Proverbs 15:28).

“The fear of YHWH is the discipline of wisdom, And before glory goes humility. To humanity belong the arrangements of the heart, Yet from YHWH comes the answer of the tongue.

• *Proverbs 15:33–16:1, Concordant Version*

If you lack wisdom, ask God for wisdom. James seems to expand on this above proverb:

“Now if anyone of you is lacking wisdom, let him be requesting it from God, Who is giving to all generously and is not reproaching, and it shall be given to him. Yet let him be requesting in faith, doubting nothing, for he who is doubting simulates a surge of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed.”

• *James 1:5–6, Concordant Version*

Thank You

A few of you contribute to ASK so that others can learn about the Scriptures in the fastest way possible without theological bias. If you read or listen to the ASK material you probably have noted clear and declarative statements that we try to back up with biblical or historical evidence. This is rare in this world and we ask for your financial assistance to continue writing and speaking the Gospel, available here in one place. Thank you for your support and your prayers.

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⁴ We are all guilty in this regard, myself included. Dr. Martin was an excellent example to follow in this regard.