



CONTEXT

Once, while on a short-term mission trip, our team took a group of Chinese immigrants to a professional baseball game. Most of these people had only been in the US for a few weeks or months. Our team discovered something that day—baseball is a really hard sport to explain to people who have no context for it.

As we kickoff our study of *The Minors*, context is key. Deuteronomy 28 and 30 provide a necessary backdrop to so much that happens in the Old Testament—and a critical framework to understand God's justice in the minor prophets.

DEUTERONOMY 28 & 30 (SELECTED)

¹ “And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God.

¹⁵ “But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.

³⁶ “The LORD will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known. And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone.

⁴¹ You shall father sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours, for they shall go into captivity.

⁴⁹ The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand.

⁵² “They shall besiege you in all your towns, until your high and fortified walls, in which you trusted, come down throughout all your land. And they shall besiege you in all your towns throughout all your land, which the LORD your God has given you.

⁶⁴ “And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known.

¹ “And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, ² and return to the LORD... ³ then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Each Week in our study, we want to provide additional resources in the form of book overviews, additional context, or an opportunity for worship. We simply do not have enough space to hit every important idea, so we will link to a variety of resources.

Scan the QR-Code for an overview of Deuteronomy—probably the most critical book for Old Testament context to understand God's heart and Israel's failure.



DISCUSSION

What is the first word that comes to mind when you hear "prophet"? Why?

1. What are the consequences of obedience? (28:1-2)

2. What single word summarizes the consequences for disobedience? (28:15)

3. What are some of the specific consequences mentioned? (28:36, 41, 49, 52, 64)

4. What will the Lord do after all these things take place? (30:1-3)

5. What makes these warnings so important for Israel to understand?

6. Practically, what should repentance look like in your life? (How do you repent and how often?)

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

As we said in the study notes, your coach is your number one asset. This box will remind you of an important idea that you may want to bring up to your coach to discuss.



STUDY NOTES

BLESSINGS & CURSES

Before jumping into our study proper, we need a brief Old Testament recap. Genesis 1–11 established the world as we know it. Genesis 12 begins the storyline of the Bible as God called a man named Abram (later Abraham) to follow him promising to make him a nation, promising him blessing, and promising his descendants a specific place—the Promised Land.

God was not ready to give the land to Abraham's family, so they eventually took refuge from a famine in Egypt. Eventually, this blessed nation began to outnumber the Egyptians, so they were taken into slavery out of fear of an uprising. Eventually, Moses led the nation of Israel out of Egypt and out of slavery.

Through Moses, God gave Israel the Law. That first generation out of Egypt failed to trust God and weren't allowed to enter the Promised Land. Eventually, their kids (the second generation) were allowed to go in. Right before they entered, Moses gathered them all up and reminded them of what they should and shouldn't do when they live in the Promised Land. That speech is (essentially) the book of *Deuteronomy*.

Any passage you go to after the book of *Deuteronomy* we might ask, "How are they doing aligning themselves to God's heart in *Deuteronomy*?" The answer was usually, "not good." Deuteronomy 28 & 30 serve as critical chapters to understand later Old Testament history. In chapter 28, God promised "**all these blessings... if you obey the voice of the LORD YOUR GOD.**" However, if Israel persisted in disobedience, God also promised that "**curses shall come upon you and overtake you.**"

Persistent disobedience would eventually lead to exile from the Promised Land—which is a big deal. God would use an idolatrous **nation** to punish his people. They would go to **captivity**. This nation would **besiege** them in every place. The people would be **scatter[ed] among all peoples**.

THE MINOR PROPHETS

In the centuries after Moses gave the Law, God rose up prophets to communicate his truth to the people. Some of Israel's kings listened to God's prophets, many didn't. The Old Testament contains several long prophetic books like *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and *Ezekiel*. Their length is why people call them "major prophets." No less important, just shorter, our study will cover several of the "minor" prophets; *Jonah*, *Obadiah*, *Joel*, *Habakkuk*, and *Malachi*.

Typically, *Athlete Studies* from *Coaches Outreach* study one Bible book or one biblical story (such as the final week of Jesus' life using all four gospels). Our study this semester will cover the five books previously mentioned. As such, we do not have the space to cover all the history and context for each book. However, your coach is (most likely) walking through an expanded form of this study that has more background information than the *Athlete Study* offers. Your coach is your number one resource during this study for additional information, encouragement, and support as God challenges you in your walk with him.

WHY SHOULD ATHLETES STUDY THE MINORS?

One advantage of moving so quickly between several books is that themes emerge regarding God's power, God's heart, his justice, his mercy, his desire for restoration, and humanity's tendency toward rebellion.

Each book was written to a specific people at a specific time to warn and admonish them to live obediently. Through Moses, God had clearly laid out the rules of the game. But, let's be clear, God isn't a toddler—he isn't just happy when you do what he says and throws a tantrum when you don't. Rather, God designed and ordered the world. He shared with his people how to live in it and prosper. Sin always leads to destruction, but God's heart always seeks restoration.

Despite God's repeated warnings, Israel continued in sin. Several books in our study are directly related to a significant event called the Babylonian Exile. God raised up a nation called Babylon to accomplish the warnings of Deuteronomy 28. Thankfully, God's heart for restoration in Deuteronomy 30 meant the nation wasn't destroyed. Instead, they had hope.

Understanding these themes in the context of Israel's history is a major reason to study *The Minors*. God's heart remains unchanged: Like in *Jonah*, God still loves restoration and wants to see the lost saved. Like in *Obadiah*, God hates pride. Like in *Joel*, God wishes for genuine repentance. Like in *Habakkuk*, God brings justice and restoration. And, like in *Malachi*, God desires pure worship because he *alone* is worthy.

Additionally, through much of the Old Testament, including *The Minors*, we see the promise of the coming Messiah—the ultimate fulfillment of God's justice and mercy. Throughout every theme in *The Minors* everything points to Jesus. Hope lives because Jesus Christ conquered sin.