

The Word with Your Pastors
Minor Prophets: Small Books, Big Themes Study Guide
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Overview

Together the Minor Prophets or “The Book of the Twelve” make up a significant portion of the Hebrew Scriptures known to Christians as the Old Testament. Written and focused in a time of nearly 400 years of Israel’s history, these prophetic books continue in the vein of the bigger prophetic works in their focus and theme. They reiterate the deeply relational heart of God for and with the people, a relationship which is certainly critical, compelling, and comforting. These prophets declare God’s concern for the entirety of the people’s life, all people, and the true heart and actions of the faithful. While the prophets often declare God’s anger at the people’s faithlessness and lack of care, it is an anger born out of deep love and not without hope for reconciliation, repair, and resurrection.

Take a look at Amos 5:18-24 and Malachi 3:1-6:

- What emotion of God is being displayed? Is it without love?
- What is being judged?
- What is asked of the people?
- Is there hope, and if so, how?

Amos 5:18-24

¹⁸ Alas for you who desire the day of the Lord!
Why do you want the day of the Lord?

It is darkness, not light;

¹⁹ as if someone fled from a lion,
and was met by a bear;

or went into the house and rested a hand against
the wall,

and was bitten by a snake.

²⁰ Is not the day of the Lord darkness, not light,
and gloom with no brightness in it?

²¹ I hate, I despise your festivals,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

²² Even though you offer me your burnt-offerings
and grain-offerings,

I will not accept them;

and the offerings of well-being of your fatted
animals

I will not look upon.

²³ Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

²⁴ But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Malachi 3:1-6

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; ³he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

⁵ Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

⁶ For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished.

Additional Study

1. For fun, read the book of Jonah (it's brief). Focus on the relationships: Jonah and God, Jonah and the people, God and the people. What do you learn about relationship with God? What does God desire and call for from Jonah, from the people, from us readers? Why is Jonah considered a prophet?
2. Think about how anger and love relate to one another. Can anger exist lovingly? When does anger go too far?
3. For all of the judgment and wrath communicated in the prophets, they all contain words of hope and promise. Why is that? Does it make a difference?