

The Minor Prophets
Meeting 3: Prophetic Theology
Bet Shalom • April 2, 2020

1.) Prophetic rhetoric usually reflects God’s activity in the near future.

a.) “Be silent before the Lord God, for the day of the Lord is near... On the day of the Lord’s sacrifice I will punish the officials and king’s sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire.... At that time, I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the people who are complacent, who say to themselves, ‘The Lord will do nothing good or bad.’ Their wealth shall be plundered and their homes laid waste.... The great day of the Lord is approaching, approaching most swiftly.” (Zephaniah 1:7-8, 12-13)

b.) “Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if you were told: For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own.” (Habakkuk 1:5-6)

2.) Habakkuk gets upset with divine inaction, but continues to worship.

a.) “Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you, ‘Violence!’ but you will not save? [...] Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. The law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth.... Why do you look idly at traitors and remain silent when the wicked person swallows up the person more righteous?” (Habakkuk 1:1-4, 13)

b.) “Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor the fruit be on the vines; though the olive crop has failed and the fields produce no grain; though the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation.” (3:17-18)

3.) The prophets foresee the divine destruction of Nineveh, Assyria’s capital.

a.) “An oracle concerning Nineveh: the book of vision of Nahum.... Nineveh is like a pool whose waters run away. ‘Stop! Stop!’ they cry, but none turns back.... Woe to the bloody city, fully of violence where killing never stops.... And all who look at you will recoil from you. ‘Nineveh has been ravaged; who will console her?’” (Nahum 1:1; 2:8; 3:1, 7)

b.) “And [God] will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and he will make Nineveh a desolation, a dry waste like the desert.” (Zephaniah 2:13)

4.) Jonah uses parody to show God's care for all people, even Israel's enemies.

a.) "Now the word of the Lord came to [Elijah], saying, 'Get up, go to Zarephath....' So, he got up and went." (1 Kgs 17:8-10) // "Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah... saying, 'Get up, go to Nineveh.' [...] But he got up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." (Jonah 1:1-3)

b.) "You are not sent to... many peoples of foreign speech and a hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to such, they would listen to you. But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me." (Ezekiel 3:6-7) // "The people [of Nineveh] believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them." (Jonah 3:4-5)

c.) "But [Nineveh's repentance] displeased Jonah greatly and he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said, '... I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. Therefore now, Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!'" (4:1-3)

d.) "And the Lord said, 'Is it good for you to be so angry? [...] You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, not did you make it grow.... Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 people... and also much cattle?'" (4:5-11)

5.) Post-exilic prophecy highlights God's reign in Israel and over the world.

a.) "Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth... and I will shake the all the nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory.... The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former... and in this place I will appoint peace." (Haggai 2:6-9)

b.) "Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord.... In those days, ten men from the nations of every tongue will take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'.... On that day, living waters will flow from Jerusalem... and the Lord will be king over all the land; on that day, the Lord will be one and his Name will be one.... Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the king, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Sukkot." (Zechariah 8:22-23; 14:8-9, 16)