

The book of Habakkuk is a unique book of prophecy. Instead of a recorded message of a prophet to the people, it is a record of a conversation between the prophet and God. The book is made up of two discourses and a final song of praise. The first discourse (1:1-11) begins with a question from Habakkuk. He was a righteous man that despised sin, and it pained him to see evil permeating Jewish society. He couldn't imagine why violence, iniquity, social injustice, and oppression went unchecked, so he took his question to God. God responded that judgment was coming—in the form of the Chaldeans! This was not what Habakkuk expected, and raised more questions than it answered. The prophet begins the second discourse (1:12—2:20) and essentially asks two questions: (1) how can a righteous God use evil Babylon and

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Living by Faith

Part of God's answer to Habakkuk's questions is recorded in Hab. 2:4; "*Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.*" The second portion of this verse is quoted multiple times in the New Testament. Look up the following passages, study them in their context, and see what you can learn of this great statement!

Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38

The Day of The Lord

Zephaniah was quite possibly a royal prophet. If the Hezekiah of his lineage (1:1) is King Hezekiah, the Zephaniah is Hezekiah's great-grandson. While that may be the case, he still has a stern message of judgment. Zephaniah worked during the life and reign of Josiah. It is likely that Zephaniah's words helped encourage Josiah and spur the nation into one last period of reformation. Unfortunately, following the grossly wicked reigns of Manasseh and Amon, the brief reform that took place under Josiah wouldn't be enough to save the nation. Zephaniah's message is one of coming judgment. He refers to this judgment as "the day of the Lord" as did other prophets. Of all the prophets, however, Zephaniah uses this term and fleshes it out more fully than any other. For the first two chapters, the day of the Lord is a terrible and frightening day, for it is a day of the Lord's anger and wrath. While Zephaniah focuses on Jerusalem and Judah and the coming punishment they faced, he also directs many words to other nations (particularly the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Cushites, and Assyrians). God's judgment would (and will) reach all nations. While the day of the Lord is a day of the Lord's anger towards sin, it is also a day of hope for the righteous. Chapter 3:9-20 turns into a message of hope for the remnant of the faithful. This teaches an important and eternal lesson: God's judgment and mercy go hand in hand. God cannot show true mercy and provide full deliverance without dealing with and punishing wickedness. The same day that is a day of "ruin and devastation" for the sinner will be a day of "singing" and "rejoicing" for the righteous and faithful. While Zephaniah's message was to Judah and looked towards her Babylonian captivity and return, it clearly points us forward to the final judgment of all nations that will take place when Christ returns as well!



"That You May Grow Thereby..."

A weekly Bible reading plan



Nahum, Habakkuk, & Zephaniah

11th Hour Prophets

Overview

This week's reading takes us back to the Old Testament, and once more to the Minor Prophets. The three Minor Prophets we encounter this week are the final three that write before the fall of Jerusalem. These men are all fairly contemporary with one another, and are also contemporaries of Jeremiah. Nahum's prophecy is unique, for it is a prophecy completely aimed at Assyria. It is not so much a message of warning as a message of certain doom. Habakkuk is a prophecy that takes the form of a conversation between the prophet and God. It spells out the terrible judgment coming for Jerusalem at the hands of Babylon, as well as the judgment Babylon itself would face. Zephaniah is a prophet during the days of righteous Josiah, but he too warns of the judgment coming with the "day of the Lord." Zephaniah seems to focus not just on the immediate judgment of Judah, but the full judgment that would one day pertain to all of creation.

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: Nahum 1-3

Tuesday: Habakkuk 1-2

Wednesday: Habakkuk 3

Thursday: Zephaniah 1-2

Friday: Zephaniah 3



"Behold, I am Against You!"

Nineveh was likely one of the greatest and most impressive cities of the ancient world. With walls which were thick and high, and an impressive moat surrounding the city, the capital of Assyria seemed built to withstand any enemy. A century earlier, the prophet Jonah had walked the streets of the impressive city with a message of judgement. At the time, the people listened and repented, for which God withheld his judgment. But Assyria had returned to her ways of cruelty, violence, and evil. God had had enough, and the time for judgment was nigh. Nahum is used by God to spell out the disaster that was about to happen to mighty city of Nineveh, as well as the whole Assyrian nation. Unlike Jonah, Nahum's message was not one of warning or a call to repentance—it was a message of doom and certain judgment. But the message of judgment for the Assyrians was a message of comfort for the Jews. While Assyria never fully conquered, overthrew, or enslaved Judah, it did oppress and terrorize the southern kingdom. That tyranny was about to come to an end. In his brief prophecy, Nahum decrees the judgment; describes the judgment; and explains how it was deserved.

Judgment Decreed (ch. 1): Nahum begins by describing the awesome attributes of God. The one true God of Judah had decreed judgment on the Assyrians. This spelt doom for Assyrians, but comfort for the Jews.

Judgment Described (ch. 2): In descriptive and prophetic language, Nahum foretells the defeat and destruction of Nineveh and Assyria.

Judgment Deserved (ch. 3): Assyria was being judged for its cruelty, corruption, idolatry, and wickedness.

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(2) how can the righteous be punished with the wicked? God answers the questions in reverse order: The righteous shall live by faith and Babylon will also be punished for her wickedness. After the discourses, nothing has changed. Judah is still evil, and Babylon is still coming. While Habakkuk is frightened, his faith is stronger. The third chapter records his prayer for mercy, a recounting of God's past actions, and a great statement of faith. The prophet's fear of God is greater than his fear of man. He will trust in the Lord and despite the trouble around him, he will find joy in the God of his salvation. The final verses of the book are a beautiful song of praise that reaffirm Habakkuk's faith in God.

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