

NAHUM

Author: Nahum

Date: 663 - 612 B.C.

Nahum means “comfort” and his message of doom for Ninevah was indeed a source of comfort to the inhabitants of Israel who had suffered under the cruelty of the Assyrians. We know little about Nahum except that he was from Elkosh, a village of unknown location. (The New Testament city of Capernaum means “City of Nahum,” so he could have lived in that area.)

In contrast to his predecessor Jonah whose ministry resulted in the repentance of Ninevah, the prophet Nahum proclaims the downfall of the great Assyrian city. The Ninevites have forgotten their revival and have returned to their habits of violence, idolatry and arrogance. As a result, Babylon will destroy the city so that no trace of it will remain (fulfilled in 612 B.C.).

Theme: Nahum proclaims the doom and destruction of the Assyrian capital of Ninevah.

Key verses: “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.” (1:7-8)

OUTLINE

- I. The Destruction of Ninevah Is Decreed (1:1-15)
- II. The Destruction of Ninevah Is Described (2:1-13)
- III. The Destruction of Ninevah Is Deserved (3:1-19)

HABAKKUK

Author: Habakkuk

Date: 612-605 B.C.

A contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah, Habakkuk warned of God’s approaching judgment through the Babylonians. His name means “embracer” and little is known about this prophet to Judah. The musical reference in this book indicates that Habakkuk may have been a Levite connected with temple worship in Jerusalem.

Although repeatedly called to repentance, Judah stubbornly refused to change her sinful ways. God tells Habakkuk the Babylonians will be his chastening rod on the nation. Though perplexed that God would use an even more evil nation to punish Judah, Habakkuk acknowledges that “the just shall live by faith.” He concludes by praising God’s wisdom even though he doesn’t fully understand God’s ways.

Theme: God is in control of the world despite apparent triumph of evil. We must trust in our Creator.

Key verses: “The just shall live by faith.” (2:4b) “O Lord, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.” (3:2)

OUTLINE

- I. The Complaints of Habakkuk (1:1 - 2:20)
- II. The Prayer of Habakkuk (3:1-19)

ZEPHANIAH

Author: Zephaniah

Date: 622 B.C.

Zephaniah repeatedly delivers the message that the day of the Lord, judgment day, is coming. God will deal with the malignancy of sin in Judah and her neighboring nations. They will soon experience the crushing hand of the wrath of God. After the chastening process is complete, blessing will come from the Lord..

Zephaniah's name means "the LORD hides." His genealogy suggests noble birth being the great-great-grandson of good King Hezekiah. He apparently lived in Jerusalem in the days of King Josiah and his forceful prophecies may have attributed to the reforms that took place under Josiah.

Theme: God's judgment in the day of the Lord is the central theme. Desolation, darkness and ruin will strike Judah and the nations because of the wrath of God upon sin. The day of the Lord is seen as having two components: judgment that results in the destruction of Judah by foreign enemies, but also hope and restoration for God's people. Zephaniah sees the second aspect of the day of the Lord as an event bringing history to a close.

Key verse: "Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord." (2:3)

OUTLINE

- I. Coming Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (1:1-18)
- II. Exhortation to Repent and Seek the Lord (2:1-3)
- III. Coming Judgment on the Gentile Nations (2:4-15)
- IV. Judgment on Jerusalem (3:1-7)
- V. Judgment and Future Blessings (3:8-20)

Application: God does not take sin lightly. It will be punished. Be encouraged though, by the words of hope--our God reigns, and he will rescue his own. Decide to be part of that faithful remnant who humbly worship and obey the living Lord.