

From the Garden to Glory

Nahum

Author: Nahum

Timeline: c. 647 B.C. (2 Kings 21)

Location: Judah/Nineveh

Category: Prophetical, Minor Prophet

Theme: Judgment and the Destruction of Nineveh

Overview:

Nahum's prophecy supplements the Book of Jonah. About one hundred and fifty years earlier, under Jonah's preaching, the city of Nineveh repented and was spared God's judgment. Nineveh's repentance, though it may have been sincere, did not last. The very sins they had repented of they were guilty of once again. They deliberately rejected God and did not heed His mercy. Nahum, whose name means *compassionate* or *full of comfort*, announced the destruction of Nineveh and thereby comforted Judah with the assurance that God is in control.

Introduction:

As we begin our study of the book of Nahum, consider the following questions and write your responses:

1. One hundred years after Jonah preached to Nineveh, the Assyrians had forgotten the Lord and returned to their pagan practices. How do you prevent this from happening in your own life? How do you remain zealous for the Lord and insure that your conversion is not short-lived?

2. Three of the ungodly practices to which the Assyrians had returned were violence, idolatry and arrogance. How do you see each of these manifested in our world today?

The Judge and the Verdict

Read Nahum 1

1. Nahum portrays God as both Judge and Father. Look at verses 2, 3 and 7 and list everything you learn about each of these aspects of God's nature.

God as Judge:

God as Father:

2. Verse 3 says, "The Lord has His way," and speaks of the sovereignty of God. How have you seen the Lord have His way in your own life?
3. Look at verses 8-10 and 14. What was the Lord's verdict concerning Nineveh?

The Execution

Read Nahum 2-3

Consider the following quote from The New Open Bible as you answer the first two questions: "Nineveh became the mightiest city on earth with walls 100 feet high and wide enough to accommodate three chariots riding abreast...In addition, the walls were surrounded by a moat 150 feet wide and 60 feet deep. Nineveh appeared impregnable...The Tigris River overflowed its banks and the flood destroyed part of Nineveh's wall. The Babylonians invaded through this breach in the wall, plundered the city, and set it on fire."

1. Look at Psalm 20:7. The Ninevites trusted in their walls and their moat rather than trusting in God. Where do you put your ultimate trust? Ask the Lord to search your heart for any *chariots and horses* in your life. (Possible examples of present day *chariots and horses* could be education, common sense, physical strength, Christian heritage, financial security, or relationships.)
2. Look at 2:13 and Jeremiah 32:17. What do you learn from these verses about the Lord's sovereignty? Nineveh *appeared* impregnable; however the Lord of hosts was against her. Is there some situation in your life right now that appears impossible? Take it to the Lord and rest in His mighty power.
3. Look at 3:11. According to Jeff Lasseigne, "In Nahum 3:11, the prophet predicted that Nineveh would 'be hidden.' And sure enough, the destruction of Nineveh was so complete that Alexander the Great marched his troops right over the same desolate ground and didn't even realize that there had once been a great city there! It wasn't until 1842 that archaeologists finally discovered the site and location that was once Nineveh." What does this tell you about Biblical prophecy and the promises of God? How does this knowledge encourage you?

Summary

As you conclude your study of the book of Nahum consider the following questions and write your answers:

1. What is the most important lesson you have learned from your study of this book? How can you apply this lesson in your life this week?
2. What "new insights" did you learn about the Lord and yourself from your study?

- 3.** List one way in which your study caused you to do each of the following:

Praise and worship the Lord:

Confess an area of sin to the Lord:

Thank the Lord:

Ask for something from the Lord:

Zephaniah

Author: Zephaniah

Timeline: c. 620 B.C. (2 Kings 22 - 23)

Location: Judah

Category: Prophetical, Minor Prophets

Theme: God's judgment is coming on Judah for disobedience

Overview:

Zephaniah is sometimes referred to as "the eleventh-hour prophet" and was one of the last prophets to warn Judah before her captivity. Zephaniah's ministry began at the beginning of Josiah's reign. He continually warned that "the day of the Lord is at hand" and judgment is coming. His purpose was to motivate God's people to repent and return to God.

Jeremiah also began his ministry at this time.

Introduction:

As we begin our study of the book of Zephaniah, consider the following questions and write your responses:

1. According to J. Vernon McGee, "Love seeks the best interest of the beloved. That is what this book of Zephaniah is all about--the dark side of love...the Father is never more close to you, my friend, than when He is reaching in and taking out of your heart and life those things that offend." What is the Father "reaching in and taking out of

- your heart and life" today? How are you responding to this loving work in your life? How does His involvement assure you of His love?
2. Zephaniah was the great grandson of King Hezekiah. How do you think this royal heritage impacted his life? How does your "royal position" as a daughter of the King of Kings influence your life?

Coming Judgments

Read Zephaniah 1-2

1. Look at 1:3. What were possible "stumbling blocks" (those things which kept the people from an intimate relationship with the Lord) in Zephaniah's day? What are the stumbling blocks in our world today? How do *you* avoid being "tripped up" by these stumbling blocks?
2. Look at 1:4-12. Summarize God's accusation against the inhabitants of Judah. In what ways does this describe our world today?
3. Look at 2:3. The meek were called to seek the Lord, seek righteousness and seek humility. How do *you* do each of these on a daily basis? Be specific.

The Kingdom Blessing

Read Zephaniah 3

1. Look at verses 1-7. God's plan was that His people would be *a special treasure* to Him *above all people* (see Exodus 19:5). How had they taken their privileged position for granted? Ask the Lord to search your own heart. How do you make sure that you do not take *your* privileged position for granted?
2. Look at verses 14-15. These verses refer to the millennial era but there is also much for which we can rejoice today. List at least 5 things which cause you to "be glad and rejoice with all your heart".

3. Look at verse 17. As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, the Lord rejoices over you. Write your response to His love in a prayer of thanksgiving and praise.

Summary

As you conclude your study of the book of Zephaniah consider the following questions and write your answers:

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Ask for something from the Lord:

Habakkuk

Author: Probably Habakkuk

Timeline: c. 621 B.C. (2 Kings 23 - 24)

Location: Judah

Category: Prophetical, Minor Prophet

Theme: The Mysteries of God's Providence

Overview:

The book of Habakkuk is unusual in that it is a conversation between the prophet and God. Habakkuk knew the coming judgment and captivity of Judah was inevitable, but he had trouble understanding why God would use a wicked nation to punish Judah. He struggled with God's sovereign ways. Habakkuk began with questioning God but he ended with intercession. His worry transformed into worship and his fear turned to faith. All of Habakkuk's "Whys" and "How longs" were resolved when he understood that God is in control.

Introduction:

As we begin our study of the book of Habakkuk, consider the following questions and write your responses:

1. The name *Habakkuk* probably means "One Who Embraces" or "One Who Clings." What causes you to embrace or cling to the Lord? What does this "look like" in your life?

2. Consider the following comment about the book of Habakkuk from Warren Wiersbe, "When you live by faith you aren't worried about the things that go on in the world. You may be burdened...but we don't lose our faith because of it." How has this been true in your own life?

Habakkuk's Complaints and God's Replies

Read Habakkuk 1 and 2

1. Habakkuk has been called the "doubting Thomas" of the Old Testament. Read James 1:6-8. What do you learn about those who doubt? How do *you* remain faithful and resist doubting?
2. Summarize Habakkuk's first complaint in 1:1-4. When have *you* had to wait on the Lord? How was your faith tested during this time? What did you learn as a result of this "waiting period"?
3. Summarize the Lord's first reply to Habakkuk in 1:5-11. Look at verse 5. When has the Lord "worked a work" in your life that caused you to be "utterly astounded"?
4. Summarize Habakkuk's second complaint in 1:12-2:1. Look at 2:1. Habakkuk was waiting expectantly for the Lord's reply. Do you expect that the Lord will answer you when you call to Him? What does Jeremiah 33:3 say about this?
5. Summarize the Lord's second reply to Habakkuk in 2:2-20. How is verse 20 an encouragement to you?

Habakkuk's Prayer and Song

Read Habakkuk 3

1. Look at verses 3-4. How is God described in these verses? Look at 1 John 1:5. How does this verse add to your understanding?
2. Look at verses 17-18. How do you continue to rejoice during times of physical, emotional or spiritual drought?
3. Look at verse 19. How has the Lord been *your* strength? How has He made you as sure-footed as a deer on a steep mountain, protecting you and keeping you from slipping?

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