

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Nahum

Nahum prophesied during the reign of King Josiah when the Assyrians were at the height of their power and were threatening Judah. The book contains a prophesy against Assyria, which is represented by Nineveh. By Nahum's time, it had been at least 125 years since Jonah's visit to Nineveh and the people there had returned to their wicked ways.

Outline of Nahum

- I. Nineveh's Judge (1:1-15)**
- II. Nineveh's Judgment (2:1-13)**
- III. Nineveh's Total Destruction (3:1-19)**

Adapted from NIV Study Bible, with modifications

Major Themes

God as the Judge of the Nations

- God is mighty over nature and creation and His sovereignty extends to His control over the destinies of nations.
- Nineveh would be reduced from its former glory to nothing (1:14-15). Nineveh's fortresses and strongholds and its military might would be useless to save them from God's judgement.

Nineveh's Destruction

- God declares twice that He was against the Assyrians (2:13; 3:5).
- There would be widespread judgement on Nineveh, from the greatest to the least (2:7; 3:18). The city would be plundered and the people scattered.
- The judgment against Nineveh was fulfilled in 612 B.C. when Nineveh was destroyed by the Medes, Babylonians, and Scythians.

God as a Refuge for His people

- God promised that Judah's affliction would end (1:12) and that they would be freed from the yoke they were under (1:13). Jacob would then be restored to splendour (2:2).
- Amidst the proclamation of woe to Nineveh there was a message of peace for Judah and a call to celebrate and to be faithful; their enemy would be no more (1:15).

Conclusion

- God cares about His people and will return to judge and to vindicate. Even in judgment He will bring blessing and comfort.
- Those who are His children should trust in Him, not the world, because He is in control of all things and is mighty to save.

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Habakkuk

Babylon was the reigning power of the day when Habakkuk was prophesying. Habakkuk's prophesy addresses mainly the problems within Judah, which at the time was in steep ethical decline. Like in the book of Job, Habakkuk consists of a dialogue between the prophet and God. There is a cry for justice but God's responses to Habakkuk's complaints are unexpected and show that His ways and His justice are greater and higher than man's understanding.

Outline of Habakkuk

- I. Habakkuk's First Complaint: Why does evil in Judah go unpunished? (1:1-4)**
- II. God's Reply: The Babylonians will punish Judah (1:5-11)**
- III. Habakkuk's Second Complaint: How can a just God use Babylon to execute justice? (1:12-2:1)**
- IV. God's Reply: Babylon will be punished and faith will be rewarded (2:2-20)**
- V. Habakkuk's Prayer: Confession of trust and trust and joy in God (3:1-19)**

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Major Themes

God's Sovereignty

- God is sovereign over all of creation; the earth, mountains, hills, rivers, streams, the sea, celestial bodies, and the forces of nature all respond and submit to Him (3:6-11).
- He is sovereign even over the actions of the wicked, they serve His purposes. He Himself is not touched by evil but in holiness He controls everything.
- In His sovereignty, He also strengthens those who put their faith in Him and gives them sure-footed confidence (3:19).

The Connection between Faith and Righteousness: "the righteous will live by faith"

- God calls on the earth to live by faith and in reverent trust in Him (2:3, 20). God is trustworthy and all that He promises will come to pass. This enables a person to live in step with Him rather than acting unjustly or out of self-interest.
- Habakkuk's response to God was one of faith (3:16), he praised God for His salvation and waited patiently for His justice.
- His faith allowed him to trust God in the absence of a full understanding of God's ways and to rejoice in the midst of bleak circumstances (3:16-19).

Conclusion

- God's ways are not our ways, yet He works all things according to His good purposes.
- What is our response when God seems distant or unjust? Do we doubt His wisdom and sovereignty or turn to Him for His strength to be patient and persevere? We must seek to live in faithful confidence in God. He rules over all and will ultimately vindicate His people despite all circumstances that appear to the contrary.

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Zephaniah

Zephaniah was a contemporary of both Nahum and Habakkuk who, like Habakkuk, addressed the issue of the wickedness of Judah. Because of Judah's idolatry, Zephaniah was sent to announce God's impending judgement on them. Zephaniah's prophecy concerns the judgement of the world, which includes Judah's fall to Babylon. Though judgment would fall first on Judah, the destruction spoken of in Zephaniah would be global (1:2-3).

Outline of Zephaniah

I. The Day of the Lord Comes on Judah and the Nations (1:1-18)

II. God's Judgement on the Nations (2:1-3:8)

III. Redemption of the Remnant (3:9-20)

Adapted from NIV Study Bible, with modifications

Major Themes

The Day of the Lord

- "The day" of any great figure was the day when that person was able to completely vanquish his enemy. This was a metaphor for that person's great power and the certainty of his enemy's destruction.
- The "day of the Lord" is mentioned seven times in Zephaniah. This is the day when God will appear with destructive judgment against sin to vindicate His own honour and to create a holy remnant for Himself.
- The day of the Lord is portrayed as a day of global judgment when God will hold all nations to account (1:18).

God's Salvation

- In God, wrath and salvation are found together. Even within oracles of woe and destruction there are often elements of mercy and restoration (2:7, 9; 3:10-20).
- God extends a hope of salvation for the humble and obedient who seek righteousness and humility (2:3).
- On the day of the Lord God will preserve a remnant for Himself, using judgment to refine and purify His people (3:9).

Conclusion

- The day of the Lord is fast approaching. On that day, believers have hope in the final fulfillment of God's salvation for them – an everlasting life spent in His presence.
- Before the Lord returns, we are to seek Him in righteousness and humility, and learn to wait patiently and confidently for Him.