

MICAH, NAHUM, ZEPHANIAH & HABBAKUK

Week 4

INTRODUCTION

Prophets of Judah: from the Assyrian invasion of Israel/Judah to the Babylonian invasion of Judah (See Table 2).

The themes of these prophets are very similar – God is the righteous king who does exactly as he wishes.

MICAH God Judges & Redeems

Micah – lit. "Who is like Yahweh?"

He was from Moresheth-gath about 20-25 miles southwest of Jerusalem.

Dating 740-690 BC (c.f. Jeremiah 26:18-19)

Message

Chapters 1-3 Failure of the Nation

1:1 & 5 Judgment for Jerusalem and Samaria.

1:5-7 Crimes Against God

1:8-16 Judgment for the Crimes

v.9 the term *makkoteyha*, translated, 'for her wound' may have been *makkat yah*¹ - 'the blow from the Lord' instead. This word fits better with 'reached'.

For the blow from the Lord is incurable, it has come to Judah, he has reached the gate of my people.

v.10 Gath was a Philistine town.

v.10-16 Each of the following Judean towns is apparently selected for its usefulness to Micah's wordplay:

| City | Identification | Word Play |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Gath | Tel es-Safi ² A Philistine city | Gath means 'weep' and it rhymes with Heb. 'tell'; 'in weep town, weep not at all'; OR 'do not tell them in tell town'; c.f. 2Sam.1:20 |
| Beth Ophrah | ? | Lit. 'house of dust'; 'dust town, roll yourself in the dust' |
| Shaphir | ? | Lit. 'pleasant' or 'beauty'; 'nakedness & shame you who live in beauty town' |
| Zaanan | ? | Rhymes with Heb. 'going forth'; 'those who live in going forth will not go forth' (beseiged within their city?) |
| Beth Ezel | Deir el-Asal? | Lit. 'house of taking away'; 'the house of taking away is in mourning; its protection is taken away' |
| Maroth | ? | Sounds like Heb. 'bitter'; in bitter town, writhe in pain' |
| Jerusalem | Jerusalem | Lit. 'city of peace'; disaster has come...to...the city |

¹ Remember, Hebrew is a consonant language, the vowels were added later to aid in pronunciation and, in this case, if an abbreviation was lost in the translation then the added vowels could as easily been these.

² A tell is a mound, the ruins of an earlier civilization, upon which a new settlement is built. Over time, these become hills.

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| | | of peace.'; note that it only came to the gate - God struck the Assyrians with a plague, killing 185,000 of them...they withdrew. ³ |
| Lachish | Tell ed-Duweir 20 mi. SW of Jerusalem | Rhymes with Heb. <i>Larekes</i> 'to the steeds' or 'team'; 'who live in team town harness the team to the chariot.' |
| Moresheh Gath | Tell ej-Judeideh A town of Judah near the Philistine city of Gath | May be related to <i>m^eorasa</i> , 'betrothed'; if so then, the idea is that like a father gives his daughter parting gifts when she leaves home, so to Judah must give parting gifts (tribute to Assyria) as she takes Moresheh Gath away. |
| Aczib⁴ | Tell el-Beida In the foothills of Judah | Lit. 'deception'; <i>achzabim</i> are brooks that dry up in the summer, thus deceiving the thirsty traveler; ' <i>the town of deception will prove deceptive to the kings of Israel</i> '; perhaps this means that it did not stop Assyria like they'd hoped. |
| Mareshah | Tell Sandahanna In the foothills of Judah | <i>Mar-ay-shav</i> is a partial rhyme with <i>yav-rash</i> a Heb. word meaning 'conqueror'; ' <i>a conqueror against you who live in conqueror town.</i> ' |
| Adullam | Tell-esh-Seikh-Madkur In the foothills of Judah | 1Sam.22:1; 2Sam.23:13 This could mean that as David was driven away from Israel by Saul to the cave of Adullam, so shall the high ranking officials of Judah be driven into hiding OR it could mean that high ranking Judah officials had to go to Adullam once it was captured by Assyria. |

2:1-11 Crimes Against Mankind & the Resulting Judgment

vv.1-5 The land is God's.

vv.6-11 An evil people never lacks religious leaders that will justify their wickedness

2:12-13 God will Re-gather Israel.

3:1-7 Leaders who feed off their people

3:8-12 A disaster is coming upon Israel & Judah's leaders & false prophets

Chapters 4-5 The Coming Messiah.

4:1-8 Theocracy on earth and Israel as his seat of power.

4:9-10 Babylonian exile predicted

4:11-5:1 Jerusalem will be besieged by many nations and then crush them all.

³ 2Ki.18:17-35; 2Chron.32:1-23; Isa.36:2-37:38

⁴ This was a fortress city that Sennacherib claimed to have overwhelmed in his annals; ANET

5:2-5a The Targum takes this to be a messianic prediction and the rabbi's at the advent of Christ believed it because when asked about the messiah's birthplace by Herod, they cited this passage.

Chapters 6-7 Israel's Present Rebellion & God's Plans.

6:1-5 God's dispute with Israel

6:6-8 What does it take to please God?

6:9-16 You will lose everything for your lack of repentance⁵

7:1-7 Micah confesses the sin of his people

7:8-20 Israel will rise because God keeps his promises.

8-10 Don't gloat because Israel will rise again

11-13 Not only rise but rebuild

14-17 Israel's restoration accompanies everyone else's demise

18-20 God will forgive. God will keep his promises.

Applications

Love God & Man (antithesis of Chs.1 & 2; 6:8)

Hunger after truth (1:6-11)

Do not misrepresent God (2:6; 3:5-8)

Set your hope on God (4:1-5; 5:2-15; 7:8-20)

NAHUM Judgment against Assyria

Nahum (lit. consolation) is unknown to the rest of the Torah. Even his birthplace, Elkosh is uncertain.⁶

Nahum's sole message is that God would destroy the destroyer of Israel & scourge of Judah - Assyria.

Dating 663-627 BC

Nahum is ordered 7th in the dodecapheton of the Torah and except for the LXX it is always placed after Micah and before Habbakkuk.

⁵ Omri was the army commander who became king, founding Samaria, fathering Ahab and pursuing idolatry (1Ki.16:16-28). Ahab introduced Baal & Asherah to Israel (1Ki.16:31), persecuted prophets (1Ki.18:4), robbed & killed (1Ki.21). Judah was following in that tradition.

⁶ Some identify it with a town 24 miles north of Ninevah. Still others believe it was a village in southern Judah (Beit-Jebrin) because 'el qos' may be a reference to the Edomite deity Qos.

Assyria is apparently strong at the time of this writing and so it was likely written before 612 BC when Assyria fell to Babylon.

Message

1:1-7 The God of white-hot anger

Every Hebrew words for wrath and anger appear in vv.2-6 including: jealous⁷, vengeance, wrath, anger⁸, indignation⁹, fierceness¹⁰, fury¹¹.

1:8-2:2 For Assyria - destruction. For Judah - rest.

2:3-3:19 Assyria will be utterly demolished.¹²

Applications

We must submit to God's plans.

God is patient but when all else fails, he will judge.

ZEPHANIAH God is Sovereign

Zephaniah - *he whom the Lord hides*.

An unusually extensive genealogy appears in 1:1 to show that Zephaniah was the great, great grandson of Hezekiah.

Zephaniah wrote during the reign of the last righteous ruler of Judah - Josiah.

Zephaniah is the whole Bible in miniature: from the hopelessness of the coming judgment of God; to a glimmer of hope that the one we need to be saved from is the one who will save us; to the certainty that God will not merely save but enthusiastically love us.

Dating 640-612

⁷ Meaning zealous; completely committed

⁸ lit. heavy or hot breathing

⁹ lit. foaming at the mouth

¹⁰ lit. heat

¹¹ lit. burning

¹² See Isaiah 10:5-19 concerning God's use and judgment of Assyria and Isa.37 concerning Sennacherib's fall.

Message

Religion of the time is mixed. There is Baal, Ashtoreth, Molech worship and Sabeanism¹³ but also Yahweh worship.

1:2-3 Creation will run in reverse as God starts removing life from the earth.

1:4-2:3 A day of Yahweh arises against Judah.

2:4-15 A day of Yahweh against the nations

3:1-20 God will purge (1-8, 11-13), cleanse (9,12-13) and restore (10, 19-20).

Application

God's grace - We don't just escape devastation (3:11), he delights in us (3:17).

HABAKKUK History is in the hands of God.
Habakkuk's name means, 'to embrace.'

Habakkuk is an admirable man because he is honest with God.

Dating 608-597 (the last days of Judah)

Message

The whole book is a dialog between Habakkuk and God: Habakkuk.

Ch1:2-4 Lord, why don't you act?

Ch.1:5-11 I am acting, I'm raising up the Babylonians.

Ch.1:12-2:1 You've got to be kidding! They're worse than we are.

Ch.2:2-3 I will do what I predicted (God answer's his complaint with a decree)

Ch.2:4-19 Five Woes

Woe to the arrogant big spender

Woe to the unjust gainers

Woe to the violent builders

Woe to those who delight in the judgment of another.

Woe to the idolators

Ch.3 Habakkuk's hymn

¹³ Worshipping the starry hosts; Jer.8:2; 19:13; 32:29; Deut.4:19; 2Ki.21:3,5; 23:5-6; Jer.7:17-18; 44:17-19,25

Lord, I fear your report.

In wrath, remember mercy

He describes God's majesty & justice.

3:16-19 - the key to the whole book - I will trust you regardless of circumstances.

Applications

God is sovereign

We must be willing to wrestle with God.

We must trust God despite circumstances.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

- Read Daniel, Ezra & Nehemiah¹⁴
- Read over the handout, *Aramaisms in Hebrew Scripture*
- Read and annotate Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi
- Memorize Zechariah 4:6b (*Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty*) and Malachi 3:17-18
- As you read through these three prophets, identify the principles that could apply to you. Which of these are the hardest to believe at this point in your life?
- Prepare answers for the following based on your study:
 1. What were the sins amongst the returning exiles?
 2. Identify one major theme for each of the three prophets.

¹⁴ Read through the material quickly, just to familiarize yourself with these periods.