

## THE BOOKS OF NAHUM, HABAKKUK AND ZEPHANIAH

### NAHUM

There is little known about the prophet Nahum other than he prophesied about one hundred and fifty years after Jonah. His subject was the same as Jonah's: the destruction of Ninevah. It is thought that Nahum may have come from the Galilee, Capernaum area. The name Kapher-Nahum means the Village of Nahum.

**The Central Message:** Nahum 1:3

"The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not acquit the wicked".

#### **The Structure of the Book**

1. The Certainty of Ninevah's Doom - Chapter 1
2. The Seige and Capture of Ninevah - Chapter 2
3. The REasons For Judgement - Chapter 3

#### **The Certainty of Ninevah's Doom**

As the capital of Assyria, Ninevah was the world's greatest city in Nahum's day. I find it interesting that two of the minor prophets are devoted to this city: Jonah and Nahum. A century before, Jonah had preached to them, but by Nahum's day they had gone into deeper sinfulness. In Jonah we see the goodness of God, and in Nahum we see His severity.

Read 1:2-3; 1:6-8

Compare 1:15 to Isaiah 52:7, and then look at Romans 10:15.

#### **The Seige and Capture of Ninevah**

Ninevah is pictured as making preparation (2:1) for an attack from the alliance of the Medes, Babylonians, Scythians, and others. The battle is vividly described: the river gates opened and the palace dissolved (2:6).

#### **The Reason For Judgement**

Chapter 3 shows that Ninevah's sins (3:4-6) are the cause of her judgement. Ninevah fell in 608 B.C., and so completely was it destroyed that in the 2nd Century A.D. even the site of it had become uncertain.

The name Nahum means "comfort", and if there is comfort to be found in the Book it is that God has pledged to avenge the innocents who have been abused as the ungodly seem to flourish. Luke 18:7-8 and Romans 12:19.

### HABAKKUK

The focus of Habakkuk's prophecy is Babylon. Obadiah spoke of the fate of Edom; Nahum the fate of Assyria, and Habakkuk the fate of Babylon.

Habakkuk is speaking to God alone about a problem that was bothering him that had to do with Jehovah's government of the nations. It begins with a dialogue and ends with an appearance of God.

Habakkuk wrote shortly after the fall of Ninevah in 608 B.C. He wrote as the Chaldeans (Babylonians) were rising to power (1:6), and he wrote concerning Judah.

**The Central Message** - "The just shall live by faith" (2:4b).

#### **The Structure of the Book**

1. THE BURDEN - CHAPTER 1
2. THE VISION - CHAPTER 2
3. A PRAYER - CHAPTER 3

#### **The Burden**

The structure comes from the first thoughts of each chapter.

In Chapter 1, Habakkuk was concerned and perplexed with the silence of God. Sin was abounding and he cries out to God (1:2-4), and God answers (5-11). Habakkuk showed wisdom by waiting to "see what He will say...and what I shall answer" (2:1).

### **The Vision**

God gave Habakkuk a wonderful vision in Chapter 2. Please pay special attention to verses 4 and 14. Verse 4 is so significant that it is quoted three times in the New Testament: **Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38.**

Verse 14 needs to be read in light of the New Testament as well. Please reference **Matthew 24:30; 25:31; II Thessalonians 1:7.**

Take into consideration that the Lord told Habakkuk that "the vision is for an appointed time - wait for it - it will surely come". 2:3

### **A Prayer**

The prayer of Habakkuk begins with an appeal for revival; read and underline 3:2.

From 3-15 there is an expression of praise for Jehovah's works of the past, and in the last part (16-19) we have the "joy of salvation". Even when circumstances seem to be at their worst, we can have rejoicing at its best. We learn the lesson of placing our burdens before the Lord; knowing He will answer: "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord".

### **ZEPHANIAH**

Zephaniah gives more of his background than do the other prophets. He begins by saying that he is the great-great grandson of King Hezekiah. He prophesied in the days of Josiah and was therefore a contemporary of Jeremiah. He was a prophet of Judah. Joel and Zephaniah are the prophets of judgement against Judah, yet both tell of a glorious deliverance.

**The Central Message** - From Desolation to Deliverance.

### **The Structure of the Book**

1. WRATH Coming on Judah - Chapters 1:1 - 2:3
2. WRATH On Nations - Chapters 2:4 - 3:8
3. WRATH to Healing - Chapter 3:9-20

### **Wrath Coming on Judah**

Everything in this section refers to judgement that is coming on Judah in the form of Babylonian captivity. Why? Vs. 17 gives the answer: "Because they have sinned against the Lord". This section closes with an appeal for repentance and a word of encouragement for the small remnant.

### **Wrath on Nations**

The message in this section looks to the surrounding nations: West - Philistines (2:4-7); East - Moab and Ammon (2:8-11); South - Ethiopia (2:12); North - Ninevah and Assyria (2:13-15). He then turns to Jerusalem to indicate that if God so smites the surrounding nations with judgement, He will also smite the people of Judah who have been privileged above all others (3:6-8).

### **From Wrath to Healing**

Here the prophet is looking beyond judgements to a time of healing and blessing. The coming Messianic Kingdom will be a blessing to all, especially God's covenant people. He ends with (3:11-20) all afflictions are to be over and Israel is to be made "a praise among all the people of the earth (3:20).

FOR NEXT WEEK

READ

HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, AND MALACHI