

## ***XII. Review***

25-May-03 Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

*Theme:* *On the Day of the Lord, God comes in judgment upon the wicked, and brings salvation to the righteous; let us be prepared for the Day of the Lord's coming.*

*Key Verses:* Nahum 1:15 "Behold, on the mountains the feed of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace! O Judah, keep your appointed feasts, perform your vows. For the wicked one shall no more pass through you; he is utterly cut off."

Habakkuk 2:4 "Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith."

Zephaniah 3:17 "The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

### Review

Last week we finished our study of Zephaniah, chapter 3. This chapter starts out with a final word of judgment against God's people, but ends in a **glorious description of God's eternal purposes toward saving a remnant out of all the nations and showering His love upon this reconstituted people of God.** The book begins with a scene of cataclysmic overthrow, and ends with an ecstatic picture of restoration and sovereign love. Zephaniah joins the great tradition of the prophets of God who picture a final consummation of things in which elect people of every nation are gathered together as the people of God, with God dwelling in their midst. **God is a Mighty Hero, who will save His people and rejoice with them for eternity.**

### Introduction

Today, we will attempt to do a quick review of the past quarter. We've looked at three of the so-called "Minor Prophets." **They are called "minor" not because they are less important, but only because they are relatively short.** Often the Minor Prophets get short shrift, because they are considered "minor" and therefore not very relevant for the Church today. Hopefully, you've been able to see through our study of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah that **these prophets still speak to the Church today.**

What I would like to do today is have a discussion about these three books, and review some of the highlights and lowlights. Specifically, let's remember some of the: 1) themes, big ideas, or common messages from these prophets; 2) words of judgment from each prophet; 3) words of hope from each prophet; and 4) applications for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians. **While I have prepared a few comments under each of these headings, this review class is a time for all of us to contribute what we have learned in this study.** So let's have a good discussion this morning as we wrap up our discussion of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah.

### Exposition

#### **A. Themes, Big Ideas, Common Messages**

The books can be summarized very briefly as follows: 1) Nahum – "Die, Nineveh, die!" 2) Habakkuk – "The just shall live by his faith;" and 3) Zephaniah – "The Day of the LORD is near." All three books emphasize that God's justice leads to judgment on the wicked and salvation of the righteous. Little is known about any of the prophets, thus emphasizing that God

## Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

uses otherwise unknown men as His “voice,” to announce His judgments against the great nations of the world. Mightier than human armies is the prophetic word of God.

Simply put, the central message of these three prophets is theocentric. God Himself occupies their every thought and provides the framework by which they perceive all reality. For the seventh-century prophets, there is no other but God alone. In these three prophets, we can see the justice of God, the judgment of God, and the salvation of God.

### 1. *The Justice of God*

One aspect of God’s justice becomes plain as the messages of these three prophets are considered together. **God’s justice is marvelously impartial. He will in no wise clear the guilty, whoever they may be.** He sees Nineveh and all the atrocities it has committed (Nah. 1; 3). He sees also all the nations surrounding Judah—to the west, the east, the south, and the north (Zeph. 2). All of these peoples will have to give account, both corporately and individually, of their violations of the law of God. But the Lord also sees Judah. When Habakkuk gives expression to his complaint over the sin of Judah, God announces the awful reality of the judgment coming on his own people. They shall be subjected to the brutalities of the Babylonian instrument just as any other heathen nation (Hab. 1). God is righteous within Judah, and so pronounces a woe over their rebelliousness (Zeph. 3). **The timing of God’s institution of justice may remain a mystery beyond human wisdom. But the message is clear. Eventually He shall bring every work into judgment whether it be good or evil. This message is sorely needed in the world today. The long-suffering of God, far from leading to repentance, leads them to presumption. Unrepentant sinners, beware!**

### 2. *The Judgment of God*

God at times may bring judgment as a way of chastening human beings to bring them to Himself. **But in the end, His judgment has a character of rightness that has no further end beyond expressing the reality that a person or a nation shall receive from God’s hand exactly what he deserves. Yet the balance must be maintained. Chastening judgments from which recovery is possible will not go on forever. The time must come for the end, and it comes on some nations and peoples in every generation.** With the ministry of Jonah in the 8th century, Nineveh repented and was restored to the favor of God, much to the chagrin of the prophet himself. But one hundred years later, the iniquity of the Ninevites had become full, and Nahum offers them no message of hope. The same may be said of Habakkuk’s message for Babylon (Hab. 2:5-20). The meaning of the Day of the Lord in Zephaniah relates closely to this same principle. No hint of restoration is found in this imagery (Zeph. 1:2-18). No message could be more repulsive to the modern mind than the idea of retributive justice. But this truth finds open exposition in the messages of these seventh-century prophets.

### 3. *The Salvation of God*

Judgment and salvation are closely linked in the theology of these prophets. **Salvation for God’s people comes directly in association with the judgment of God’s enemies.** Nahum’s “glad tidings” may be published in Judah only because Nineveh has been destroyed (Nah. 1:15). Habakkuk’s sober joy (Hab. 3:16-19) emerges as a matured fruit of his contemplation on the series of judgments that shall fall first on God’s own people and then on the heathen nations. Zephaniah too must “wait” while the Lord’s indignation is poured out, for then He shall purify his people (Zeph. 3:8-9). Salvation for him also comes through judgment.

**The salvation of God ultimately shall include Gentiles as well as Jews (Zeph. 3:9-10).** Between the judgment executed on the people of Israel and the judgment executed on the heathen nations, the justified by faith shall live by faith (Hab. 2:4). Echoing the original message to Abraham the “father of nations,” this word of acceptance by faith alone has international implications. The love of God for a sinful people functions as the key factor in the salvation activity of God.

In sum, the salvation message of these prophets who must witness the breakup of nations centers on **the possession of God Himself**. Since every thing else has been taken from them, they must look to Him alone. All other blessings may be removed; yet they still will possess the ultimate blessing. **All other things can have meaning only as they possess God himself and are possessed by Him.**

God’s justice leads to judgment on the wicked and salvation of the righteous. This is the message of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century prophets. It is a message for their time, for our time, for all time. It is a message for us. God judges the wicked and saves the righteous. Remember, “The righteous will live by his faith.” Let us live in faith before our great God.

### **B. Words of Judgment from Each Prophet**

I’ve listed three short passages from each prophet (1 per chapter except in Zephaniah, where I take two from chapter 1 and none from chapter 2). These passages are representative of the words of judgment from each prophet. Read the passages and reflect on these words of judgment.

#### *4. Nahum (1:2-3; 2:13; 3:19)*

- 1:2 a A God of jealousy*
  - b and one who takes vengeance is Yahweh;*
  - b one who takes vengeance is Yahweh*
  - a and a master of wrath.*
  
- a One who takes vengeance is Yahweh*
  - b toward His adversaries;*
  - a and He reserves wrath*
  - b for His enemies.*
- 1:3 a Yahweh—*
  - b longsuffering in anger*
  - b and great in strength*
  - b and by no means will He clear the guilty.*
  
- Yahweh—*
  - a in whirlwind and in storm*
  - b (is) His way,*
  - a and clouds*
  - b (are) the dust of His feet.*

## Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

2:13 *“Behold Me! I am against you!”  
is the pronouncement of Yahweh of hosts.*

- a *“So I will burn up*
  - b *in smoke*
  - c *her chariots.*
- a *So the sword shall devour*
  - c *your young lions.*
- a *So I will cut off*
  - b *from the earth*
  - c *your prey;*  
*and never shall be heard again*  
*the voice of your messengers.”*

3:19 *There can be no lessening  
of your blow;  
your plague  
is fatal.*

*All who hear your story  
will clap their hands over you.  
For upon whom  
has not your cruelty been inflicted  
continually?*

### 5. Habakkuk (1:2-6a; 2:16; 3:12)

- 1:2 a *How long, O Yahweh, shall I cry for help?*
  - b *But no! You will not hear.*
- a *I cry out to you, “Violence!”*
  - b *But no! You will not save.*
- 1:3 a *Why do You make me look*
  - b *on trouble?*
  - b *At suffering*
- a *You force me to stare.*

*Plundering and violence confront me;  
There is strife, and contention arises.*

- 1:4 *Therefore*
- a *God’s law*
    - b *is numbed;*
  - a *justice*
    - b *is not carried out to its proper end.*
- For the wicked surround the righteous;  
therefore justice goes forth perverted.*

## Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

1:5 *Look among the nations  
and see!  
Be astonished!  
Wonder!*

*For I am working a work in your days;  
You would not believe  
even if it were told.*

1:6a *For behold Me raising up the Chaldeans*

2:16 *You are satiated  
with shame rather than glory!  
You do some drinking!  
Expose yourself as uncircumcised.  
The cup of the right hand of Yahweh  
shall rotate around to you,  
and putrid shame (shall be) all over your glory.*

3:12 a *In indignation*  
b *You march through the land;*  
a *in wrath*  
b *You thresh the nations.*

### 6. Zephaniah (1:2-3; 1:15-16; 3:1-2)

1:2 *I shall wipe out completely  
everything on the face of the earth,  
declares Yahweh!*

1:3 *I shall wipe out  
man and beast;  
I shall wipe out  
the birds in the sky,  
and the fish in the sea—  
and the stumbling blocks with the wicked.  
Particularly man I shall exterminate from the face of the earth,  
declares Yahweh!*

1:15 *A Day of overflowing wrath  
is that Day.  
A Day  
of adversity and distress;  
a Day  
of destruction and desolation;  
a Day  
of darkness and thick darkness;*

## Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

- a Day  
of cloud and thick cloud;*
- 1:16 *a Day  
of trumpet blast and battle shout  
against the fortified cities  
and against the highest corner towers.*
- 3:1 *Woe  
for the rebellious,  
the polluted,  
the oppressing city.*
- 3:2 *a She has not hearkened  
b to the Voice;  
a she has not accepted  
b correction.  
a In Yahweh  
b she has not trust;  
a to her God  
b she has not drawn near.*

### C. Words of Hope from Each Prophet

But these prophets are not all about judgment. Even in judgment there is hope – hope for God’s people that God’s enemies will be destroyed. However, there is even more hope than that for God’s people – God will gather His people together and love them with an eternal love. Reflect on these words of hope from the three prophets.

#### 1. Nahum (1:7; 1:15; 2:2)

- 1:7 *Good is Yahweh,  
a refuge in the day of adversity.  
And He knows those who seek shelter in Him.*
- 1:15 *Behold! On the mountain!  
The feet of  
the one who brings glad tidings,  
the one who publishes peace.  
Celebrate your festivals,  
O Judah!  
Fulfill your vows!*
- For never again will Belial  
pass through you;  
he is altogether cut off.*
- 2:2 *For Yahweh has returned the eminence of Jacob  
as the (ancient) eminence of Israel;  
for the emptiers (once) emptied them;*

## Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

*evacuators evacuated,  
and they destroyed everyone of their tender sprouts.*

### 2. Habakkuk (1:12;2:2-4; 2:14; 3:17-19)

*1:12 Are not You from eternity,  
Yahweh, my God, my Holy One?  
We shall not die.*

- a Yahweh*
- b for justice*
- c You have set him;*
- a and O Rock*
- b for rebuke*
- c You have established him.*

*2:2 And Yahweh answered me and said:*

- a Inscribe*
- b the vision*
- a and make it plain*
- b on the tablets,*
- c so that he who proclaims it may run.*

*2:3 For yet the vision  
(is) for the appointed time,  
and it yearns for the end;  
it cannot lie.*

*If it tarry,  
wait for it;  
for it is sure to come,  
nor will it delay.*

*2:4 Behold!*

- a The proud—*
- b his soul is not upright in him;*
- a But the justified—*
- b by his steadfast trust he shall live.*

*2:14 For the earth shall be filled  
with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh  
as the waters cover the sea.*

## Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

- 3:17 *Even though*  
a *the fig tree*  
b *shall not blossom*  
b *and no fruit (shall be)*  
a *on the vines;*
- a *shall fail*  
b *the making of the olive;*  
b *and the fields*  
a *shall not make food;*
- a *shall be cut off from the fold*  
b *the flock*  
b *and no cattle*  
a *(shall be) in the stalls.*
- 3:18 *Yet I—*  
a *in Yahweh*  
b *I shall exult;*  
b *I shall rejoice*  
a *in the God of my salvation.*
- 3:19 *Yahweh my God (is) my strength.*  
a *For He will set my feet*  
b *like hinds' (feet);*  
b *and on my high places*  
a *He will make me walk.*

### 3. Zephaniah (2:3; 2:11; 3:9-17)

- 2:3 *Seek Yahweh*  
all you meek of the land  
who do His justice;  
seek righteousness,  
seek meekness.  
*Perhaps you shall be hid in the day of the wrath of Yahweh.*
- 2:11 *Yahweh will be fearful among them,*  
*for He will make lean all the gods of the earth.*  
*They shall worship Him,*  
every man from his own place,  
(even) all the islands of the nations.

## Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

- 3:9 *For then*  
I shall convert the nations  
so that they speak with a purified lip,  
that they all may call on the name of Yahweh,  
to serve Him with a single shoulder.
- 3:10 *From beyond the rivers of Cush*  
my suppliants,  
the daughter of My dispersed people,  
will bring My offering.
- 3:11 *In that day*  
you will not be ashamed  
for all your deeds  
by which you have sinned against Me.
- For then*  
I shall remove from your midst  
those among you who pridefully rejoice.  
You will not exalt yourself every again  
in My holy mountain.
- 3:12 *But I shall leave in your midst*  
a humble and poor people,  
who will seek shelter in the name of Yahweh.
- 3:13 *The remnant of Israel*  
will not do  
evil,  
will not speak  
a lie;  
a deceitful tongue  
will not be found in their mouth.
- For they*  
will feed  
and lie down,  
and none will make afraid.
- 3:14 *a Sing,*  
*b daughter of Zion;*  
*a shout,*  
*b Israel;*  
*a rejoice and be jubilant with all your heart,*  
*b daughter of Jerusalem.*
- 3:15 *a Yahweh has removed*  
*b your punishments,*  
*a He has turned back*  
*b your enemy.*  
*The King of Israel,*  
*Yahweh,*  
*(is) in your midst;*  
*never will you fear evil again.*

## Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

3:16 *In that day*

*a it shall be said of Jerusalem,  
b Do not fear;*

*a Zion  
b do not let your hands fall limp.*

3:17 *Yahweh your God (is) in your midst,  
a mighty hero who saves.*

*a He will delight*

*b over you  
c with joy;*

*a He will be quiet*

*b (over you)  
c in His love;*

*a He will rejoice*

*b over you  
c with singing.*

### Conclusion

#### **D. Applications for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians**

Ask the class for applications for their lives. Discuss.

The overall theme is this: **On the Day of the Lord, God comes in judgment upon the wicked, and brings salvation to the righteous; let us be prepared for the Day of the Lord's coming.**

God is the same yesterday, today, forever. The words of judgment spoken by 7<sup>th</sup> Century BC prophets are the same words that 21<sup>st</sup> Century people need to hear today. **The Day of God's wrath is coming.** One day, we will all stand in front of God to give an account of our lives. God is patient and long-suffering, but will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.

**We are to hear the words of judgment in these prophets and seek the Lord, seek righteousness, seek refuge in Him. Then we will live, we will live by faith.** Like Habakkuk, we will be able to rejoice in the Lord, regardless of circumstance. And as we live in faith, we will have hope that **God is gathering His people to Himself, out of every nation, tribe, and tongue, and that He will purify them and love them with an everlasting love.** The amazing message of Zephaniah is that God rejoices over His people in His love for them. This is the message for us. **Let us trust in God for refuge, live in faith regardless of circumstance, and hope in Him for joy and peace everlasting.**

Next week: Summer quarter begins – combined adult Sunday school class on the life of Abraham: Genesis 12-25.

Close in Prayer.