

## IMMERSE: PROPHETS

Week 8 – Zephaniah, Nahum & Habakkuk

July 23, 2023

“The books of Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakkuk are often neglected by pastor and people alike, to the loss of all concerned.” WHY?

### Zephaniah

Who is Zephaniah?

Zeph. 1:1 - *The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.*

It appears that Zephaniah prophesied between 635 and 625 BC when Judah continued to worship idols. In 622 BC the Book of the Law was found by Hilkiah the High Priest! The Book of the Law was read to the people...the children of Israel in the Kingdom of Judah...after which King Josiah initiated extensive reforms (II Kings 23), tearing down the connections with pagan worship. But the intensity of evil engaged in prior to the reforms had had such an effect on Judah.

God’s message through Zephaniah on the Day of the Lord warned Judah that the final days were near, through divine judgment at the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian King (605-586 BC). YET, Zephaniah’s message re: the Day of the Lord also looked toward a far fulfillment in the last days/the end of the age (Dan. 9:27). The OT passages referring to the Day of the Lord often speak of both a near and a far fulfillment (or double reference fulfillments). Some OT passages that refer to the Day of the Lord describe historical judgments which have already occurred. While others refer to divine judgments that will take place toward/at the end of the age.

Once again, as we’ve already read in the prophetic books, the message is judgment and HOPE!

Zephaniah’s name is thought to mean “the LORD hides” – Zephaniah 2:3 - *Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD’s anger.* “It may be” – I’m suggesting that these three words appear to reference that the hiding – in the FUTURE – might not be for all – only for the faithful remnant.

During this time in the future (mid-tribulation), the remnant will be hidden in a place prepared for them. Cross reference....

Rev. 12:6 - *the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days (3.5 years).*

Isa. 26:20-21 – *Come, my people (Israel – in the context), enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. <sup>21</sup> For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain.*

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And, in Isa. 63:1-4 we read that Jesus comes from Bozrah with bloodied garments from fighting “the nations” coming against Israel at Petra/Bozrah during the end of the war of Armageddon.

### Judgment/HOPE....

In Zeph. 2 we read of judgment on the nations – the Gentile nations. In Zeph. 3:1-7 we read of the wickedness of Jerusalem...

Zeph. 3:1-2 - *Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted, to the oppressing city (Jerusalem). <sup>2</sup> She has not obeyed His voice, she has not received correction; she has not trusted in the LORD, she has not drawn near to her God.*

AND...Zephaniah PROCLAIMS in Zeph. 3:5 - the LORD is righteous in her midst!!!

*The LORD is righteous in her midst, He will do no unrighteousness. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He never fails, But the unjust knows no shame.*

God had been nothing but righteous to them, yet they responded with sin. Eventually they put themselves on the wrong side of God’s righteousness and face His justice.

Zeph. 3:6-7 - *I have cut off nations, their fortresses are devastated; I have made their streets desolate, with none passing by. Their cities are destroyed; there is no one, no inhabitant. <sup>7</sup> I said, ‘Surely you will fear Me, you will receive instruction’— so that her dwelling would not be cut off, despite everything for which I punished her.*

God brought His justice to the Gentile nations which should have warned Judah what would happen if they rejected God. Instead of learning from the surrounding nations, Israel dedicated themselves to ungodliness all the more.

*Zeph. 3:8-9 - Therefore (because of Who I Am!!!) wait for Me,” says the LORD, until the day I rise up for plunder (for judgment); My determination is to gather the nations...to pour on them My indignation, all My fierce anger; all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy. For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord. God will bring judgment – and then restoration.*

Most Bible scholars understand this as fulfilled in the days of the Millennium, when Jesus will reign for 1,000 years over this earth after His return in power and glory. From this passage many scholars believe that in that day the world will go back to a common language. We know that Jesus will judge the nations that will come against Israel at His Second Coming (Matt. 25:31-41). From this passage we know that only believers will go into the Millennial kingdom at the outset.

*Zeph. 3:10-13 - From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, The daughter of My dispersed ones (the ones who have been scattered – Israel), shall bring My offering. In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds in which you transgress against Me; for then I will take away from your midst those who rejoice in your pride, and you shall no longer be haughty in My holy mountain (the kingdom of God in Jerusalem - Isa. 2:1-4) <sup>12</sup> I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD. <sup>13</sup> The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid.*

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In the millennial earth Israel will be the world’s superpower, but she will not be proud or haughty. She will be transformed and will know that her standing is all of grace.

“For they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid” - This speaks of the peace and prosperity Israel will know in the millennial earth.

God is directing His comments to Israel. Let’s ask God to increase our joy in Him as we read this portion of Scripture!

*Zeph. 3:14-20 - Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! <sup>15</sup> The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall see disaster no more. <sup>16</sup> In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: ‘Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak. <sup>17</sup> 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.’ <sup>18</sup> ‘I will gather those who sorrow over the appointed assembly, who are among you, (there is a distinction among the people in the Kingdom of God) to whom its reproach is a burden. <sup>19</sup> Behold, at that time I will deal with all who afflict you; I will save the lame, and gather those who were driven out; I will appoint them for praise and fame in every land where they were put to shame. <sup>20</sup> At that time I will bring you back, even at the time I gather you; for I will give you (Israel) fame and praise among all the peoples (the Gentile nations) of the earth, when I return your captives*

*before your eyes, 'Who did God return to their land? Israel – the captives!*  
*Says the LORD. These are the words of the LORD.*

Have we underestimated God's joy? God REJOICES in His people with singing! Do we often think of God singing? Can we even imagine?

## NAHUM

Nahum means "comfort" or "consolation" and is a short form of Nehemiah ("comfort of YHWH").

Nahum 1:1 - *The burden (prophecy) against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite (identity uncertain). One theory is that it refers to the city later called Capernaum (which literally means "the village of Comfort"; "the village of Nahum") at the Sea of Galilee.*

NOTE: The significance of the writing prophets was not their personal lives; it was God's message through them!

Nahum is the sequel to the book of Jonah. Nineveh repented at Jonah's message. Nineveh dates back to Gen. 10:11 where we read that Nimrod went to Assyria and built Nineveh. Nineveh was always one of Assyria's royal cities and served as the capital for many years. Assyria a brutal Gentile empire that came against Israel. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and cry out against it. But, Jonah fled to Tarshish (perhaps southern Spain). Jonah 4:1-2 reveals Jonah's heart. We read that Jonah was displeased thinking that God, in His grace and mercy, wanted to save the brutal Ninevites. Jonah clearly understood the gracious character of God and Jonah didn't want God's mercy to pour down on Nineveh!!!

And so, God prepared a unique escort for Jonah. Jonah, in his fleeing, was uniquely "escorted" to the shores of Assyria and walked to Nineveh, crying out to them, "Yet forty days, and

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Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). Any thoughts about that message? What was the result?

Jonah 3:5 - *So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.*

Perhaps Jonah's appearance, having come from the belly of the fish spoke to them.

Perhaps you've wondered if the Ninevites were truly saved/born again. Their belief in God was spoken of by Jesus....

Matt. 12:41 - *The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.*

The people at that time (different generation) had repented. In the time of Nahum, Nineveh returned to their evil ways. The Assyrians had become more brutal in their conquests (hanging the bodies of their victims on poles and putting their skin on the walls of their tents among other atrocities). Now Nahum was telling the people of Judah not to despair because God had pronounced judgment and the Assyrians would soon be getting just what they deserved.

Nahum did not write this book as a warning or “call to repentance” for the people of Nineveh. God told them what would occur! In Nahum 2 God speaks of the destruction of Nineveh. In Nahum 3 God speaks WOE to Nineveh. “Woe” means “oh, alas.” Nahum 3:14-15 – God through Nahum tells Nineveh to prepare for battle...only to be destroyed.

Nahum 3:18-20 – *Your shepherds slumber; O king of Assyria; your nobles rest in the dust. Your people are scattered on the mountains, And no one gathers them. <sup>19</sup> Your injury has no healing, your wound is severe. All who hear news of you will clap their hands over you, for upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?*

Death came upon Nineveh. She would not recover and all who hear of it will rejoice – they will clap their hands for Nineveh’s wickedness impacted many.

## HABAKKUK

(no notes; listen on audio recording)