

The Message of the Old Testament

A Book-by-Book Study

Micah

Micah's Opening Word

The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. (1:1-2)

Background

- ▶ A contemporary of _____.
- ▶ Days of Kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.
- ▶ 750 - 680 B.C.
- ▶ Spoke concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.
- ▶ Delivered during critical days of political upheaval and social unrest.
- ▶ Assyrians invaded Judah several times.

Outline

- I. God Denounces Present Sins (1-3)
- II. God Will Exalt the Remnant (4-5)
- III. God Removes Sin for Abraham's Sake (6-7)

The Message of Micah

God Denounces Present Sins. He is a witness against the earth.
1:2-5a

Particular Sins.

Idolatry. (1:7)

Defrauding neighbor by deliberate calculation. (2:1-2)

They reject sound preaching. (2:6)

They embrace false preaching. (2:11)

Leaders abuse the people.

(3:1-3)

(3:9-11)

God will exalt the Remnant (4:1-3)

The remnant will disown idols.

(4:4-5)

(4:6-7)

He will protect that remnant. (4:11-12)

He will remove the effects of sin—war, sorcery, idolatry. (5:10-14)

God will remove sin for Abraham's sake

He has a complaint against His people (6:2)

The people have acted as though God is unreasonable. (6:6-7)

But God will keep His covenant (7:18-20)

When Mary spoke in praise of God in what is called "The Magnificat," she closed with this statement: [The Lord] has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to _____ and to his offspring forever."

Jesus is God's means of casting our sins into the _____ of the sea.

Nahum

- ▶ Scholars are unsure about the location of Elkosh
 - ▶ Prophecies probably delivered around 655-650 BC
 - ▶ Nineveh fell around 612 BC
 - ▶ Nineveh had been fashioned into the _____ of the Assyrian empire by Sennacherib (704-681). He had nearly tripled the size of the city with parks, a botanical garden, and a zoo. Its splendor was probably surpassed in the ancient world only by Nechadnezzar's Babylon.
- (Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, A Survey of the Old Testament, 397).

- ▶ Assyrians were known for their utter brutality and wickedness.
 - ▶ God had previously spoken of their punishment in Isaiah 14:24-25 and Zephaniah 2:13-15.
 - ▶ "In the eighth century BC, the prophet Jonah went to the city of Nineveh to proclaim a judgment oracle against her. The Ninevites responded with repentance, and God spared them. More than a century later, Nahum also declared the judgment of God upon the wicked city of Nineveh. This time there was no fasting or sackcloth, and Nineveh was not spared."
- (Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, A Survey of the Old Testament, 395)

Outline

The Patience and Jealousy of God (1:1-15)

The Divine Opposition to Nineveh (2:1-13)

The Humiliation of the Arrogant (3:1-19)

The Message of Nahum

The Patience and Jealousy of God (1:2-8)

The reason for God's judgment is His _____. The reason for God's _____ is also His character. God does what He does because of who He is.

God's jealousy manifested

(1:14)

They worship and serve gods who are not God at all.

The Divine Opposition to Nineveh (2:1-13)

After noting the rationale for God's actions, the prophet declares the shattering of Nineveh. Nineveh will be plundered, pillaged and stripped by powerful forces that cause Assyria's best soldiers to fail to defend their capital. Women will be captured, riches will be taken and the city will be torn, though it has been as mighty as a lion. (Paul House, Old Testament Theology, 374)

The Humiliation of the Arrogant

(3:5-7)

(3:17-19)

Within the Book of the Twelve the book [of Nahum] begins to keep Yahweh's pledges of punishment that are so prevalent in Hosea—Micah. Sin will not be allowed to flourish unchecked. As part of the prophets, Nahum demonstrates Yahweh's control of both near and distant history. What Isaiah envisioned about Assyria has come true. Surely what all the prophets envision about the Davidic promise and God's eventual, eternal reign over re-created creation will transpire as well. (House, 373)

God's threats of wrath are not empty. The Holy Righteous God is a God whose patience knows an end. All sinners abide under the condemnation of God. Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath on the cross. All who believe on him will not perish. But for those who do not cast themselves on Christ, the wrath of God abides on them.

Habakkuk

- ▶ Beyond the fact that he has the strangest name among the prophets we know very little about this man.
- ▶ Prophecies were made between 640 – 626 BC.
- ▶ A contemporary of _____.
- ▶ Unique among the prophets in that he addresses not people on behalf of God but addresses God Himself

Outline

- I. What about unanswered cries? (1:2-11)
Habakkuk questions and God answers
- II. What about justice? (1:12-2:20)
Habakkuk questions and God answers
- III. What about mercy? (3:1-19)
Habakkuk requests, reflects, and resolves

The Message of Habakkuk

I. What about unanswered cries?

Habakkuk asks: (1:2-4)

Habakkuk is perplexed because God appears to be doing _____ when Habakkuk is crying for help, is seeing pervasive violence, sin, destruction, and injustice.

The Lord answers. (1:5-11)

The Lord assures Habakkuk that the sin and injustice he sees in Judah is not unseen by him nor is it going to go _____. God is raising up the _____ to come and discipline his people. The Babylonians are speedy, powerful, and ruthless.

II. What about justice?

Habakkuk asks: (1:12-2:1)

God is everlasting and Holy. He is of purer eyes than to see _____. How can he not intervene when the wicked overtakes the one more righteous than he? How can God not intervene when this nation is so wicked and idolatrous?

What about justice? God answers (2:2-4)

The wicked will not prosper _____. Yahweh's judgment of the wicked may seem slow, but it will come, and it will devastate the wicked. The righteous meanwhile shall live by _____.

God answers, "woe is coming."

(2:6-8)

(2:9)

(2:12)

(2:15-16)

(2:18-19)

The preceding verses pronounce the woes against Babylon.

"First, _____ will come as Babylon wearies itself trying to become prominent, for God alone will be known by all people everywhere (2:12-14). . . . Second, woe will come as Yahweh judges Babylon for its bloodthirsty ways (2:15-17). Third, woe will engulf Babylon because God, not idols, rules human history (2:18-20). Idols are the work of _____ hands, but the Lord is other than such blocks of wood and pieces of metal (2:20)." (House, 378)

III. What about mercy? (3:1-19)

Habakkuk requests

(3:2)

(3:3)

Habakkuk reflects

(3:16)

Habakkuk resolves

(3:17-19)

By faith [the prophet] will wait, though all seems bleak around him. He will do so despite the fact that Israel and Israel's conqueror must fall before his faith will be vindicated. God's word alone is enough to fuel this faith." (House, 379)

Summary:

A delay in justice is not injustice.

God uses even the wicked to accomplish justice.

All the wicked will eventually be judged.

The righteous are those who have faith and trust God even when the world appears chaotic.

Zephaniah

- ▶ Possibly a member of the royal household.
- ▶ Days of King Josiah.
- ▶ 627-626 B.C.
- ▶ A contemporary of Jeremiah, Nahum, Habakkuk.

Outline

God Sweeps Away Sin (1:2-17a)

God Consumes the Nations (1:17b-3:5)

God Creates the Remnant (3:6-20)

The Message of Zephaniah

I. God Sweeps Away Sin (1:2-3)

Zephaniah begins not with a catalog of sins but a striking statement of total, devastating punishment.

The same sins as have been mentioned by other prophets are the cause of his judgment.

(1:7)

(1:14-16)

II. God Consumes Nations (2:5-11)

(2:5)

(2:8-9a)

God Consumes Nations . . . Yet those who humble themselves before the Lord will be rescued in this day.

(2:3)

(2:7)

III. God Creates the Remnant

(3:9-13)

(3:15-20)

Renewal results from punishment. It is the ultimate purpose of judgment, and the remnant's rejoicing gives human voice to this theological principle. God always retains a remnant beyond devastation to promote renewal.

Zephaniah concludes the emphasis on judgment begun in Nahum. At this point in the Twelve all polytheists on earth stand under divine condemnation. The sins chronicled in Hosea-Micah will be punished. Still renewal is the goal beyond devastation. (House, 383)