

MICAH, NAHUM, ZEPHANIAH & HABBAKUK

Week 4

INTRODUCTION

Prophets of Judah (remember, there's a famine of the 'word of the Lord' in Israel (Amos 8:11)): **from the Assyrian invasion of Israel/Judah to the Babylonian invasion of Judah.**

765-756	763		Micah (c.758-710; others put it at 740-690; acc to Jer.26:18f he prophesied during the reign of Hezekiah)	6/15/763 - A total solar eclipse
755-746	753 752 750	Zachariah (Shallum assassinated him) Shallum (Menahem assassinated him) Menahem	Jotham; co-regent 'til 739	Ashurnirari V (754-746)
745-736	745 743 742 740	Assyrian head taxes initiated Pekahiah (Pekah assassinated him) Pekah (Hoshea assassinated him)	Ahaz; co-regent 'til 731 Isaiah (c.740-680)	Tiglathpileser III (Pul; 2Ki.15:19) becomes the Assyrian ruler; expansionism begins again This is the time of Assyrian dominion over the entire middle east
735-726	734 732 728	Pekah/Rezin kill 120,000 and briefly abduct another 200,000 Jews from in and around Jerusalem Hoshea	Ahaz, under siege by Pekah-Israel & Rezin-Damascus to force an alliance with them against Assyria, asks Assyria for help. Hezekiah; co-regent 'til 715	
725-716	722	Israel overrun by Assyria 724-722 under king Sargon		Shalmaneser V invades (724) captures and destroys Samaria (722)
715-706				Sennacherib captures all of Judah's fortified cities
705-696	697		Manassah – trad. he killed Isaiah	c.681-669 Esarhaddon
695-646			Nahum (c.663-627)	~50 year period; c.669-633 Ashurbanipal
645-636	642 640		Amon Josiah Zephaniah (c.640-612)	
635-616			Jeremiah (c.626-585);	Jeremiah's ministry begins
615-606	612 609f		Habakkuk (c.608-597) Jehoaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin	Josiah killed by Egyptian king Neco; captured Jehoaz and set Jehoiakim (son of Josiah) up as king of Judah Ninevah falls to Nabopolassar 612 BC
605-596	605 597		Jerusalem captured by Babylon on March 15-16 597 while under the leadership of Jehoiachin. Zedekiah's leadership	Daniel (c.600-530) and his cohorts transplanted to Babylon c.605-562 Nebuchanezzar

			extended from this date until 586	
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THE THEMES OF THESE PROPHETS ARE VERY SIMILAR – GOD IS THE RIGHTEOUS KING WHO DOES EXACTLY AS HE WISHES.

MICAH - GOD JUDGES & REDEEMS

MICAH'S NAME MEANS, "WHO IS LIKE YAHWEH?"

HE WAS FROM MORESHETH-GATH ABOUT 20-25 MILES SOUTHWEST OF JERUSALEM.

Micah was a Judean who largely ministered to Judah. He wrote very near the Assyrian onslaught against Israel & against Jerusalem by Sennacherib.

Micah's message is so much like his contemporary Isaiah's message that some regard it as the book of Isaiah in miniature (they had overlapping ministries).

DATING 740-690 BC

According to Jeremiah, Micah ministered during the reign of Hezekiah (**JER.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

The sins of Israel & Jerusalem are idolatry.

If idolatry in Judah is a concern then we must assume Micah wrote prior to the Hezekiah reforms.

Hezekiah did not begin his reforms until the 5th year of his reign.

1:8-16 JUDGMENT FOR THE CRIMES

Micah uses many devices in this section to build the tension of his lament and to make the points memorable.¹

V.9 THE TERM *makkoteyha* - 'FOR HER WOUND' MAY HAVE BEEN *makkat yah*² - 'THE BLOW FROM THE LORD'

Because the later masculine form, *naga* - '**reached**' doesn't fit, 'for her wound' but does fit, 'the blow from the Lord.'

If this is true then the expression should read, "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.

This verse repeats David's lament over the deaths of Saul & Jonathan at the hands of the Philistines (2 Samuel 1:20).

Philistines should be given no reason to rejoice in their victory.³

V.10-16 Each of the following Judean towns were amongst those destroyed by Sennacherib in 701 BC⁴ as he proceeded toward Egypt; they were chosen for this prophecy apparently b/c they were useful in Micah's wordplay.

illust - Cleveland will be a cleaved-land; Columbus, discover your new world; Toledo will be destroyed as if by a tornado.

City	Identification	Word Play
Gath (1:10a)	Tel es-Safi ⁵ A Philistine city	Gath means 'weep' and it partially rhymes with Heb. 'tell' (<i>nawgad</i>); 'in weep town, weep not at all'; OR 'do not tell them in tell town'; OR it's just a rhyming line. c.f. 2Sam.1:20
Beth	?	Lit. 'house of dust'; 'dust town, roll yourself in the dust'

¹ These include: alliteration, wordplay and parallelism.

² Hebrew is a consonant language, the vowels were added later to aid in pronunciation. So, if an abbreviation was lost in the translation then the added vowels could as easily been these.

³ 2Sam.1:20

⁴ About 20 years prior to Sennacherib's invasion Sargon of Assyria destroyed Israel (722 BC).

⁵ A tell is a mound, the ruins of an earlier civilization, upon which a new settlement is built. Over time, these become hills.

Ophrah (1:10b)		
Shaphir (1:11a)	?	Lit. 'pleasant' or 'beauty'; 'nakedness & shame you who live in beauty town'
Zaanan (1:11b)	?	<i>Tsa 'anan</i> partially rhymes with Heb. 'going forth' (<i>yatsa</i>); 'those who live in going forth will not go forth' (beseiged within their city?)
Beth Ezel (1:11c)	Deir el-Asal?	Lit. 'house of taking away'; 'the house of taking away is in mourning; its protection is taken away'
Maroth (1:12a)	?	<i>Maroth</i> sounds like Heb. 'bitter' (<i>marah</i>); 'in bitter town, writhe in pain'
Jerusalem (1:12b)	Jerusalem	Lit. 'city of peace'; disaster has come...to...the city of peace.'; note that it only came to the gate - God struck the Assyrians with a plague, killing 185,000 of them...they withdrew. ⁶
Lachish (1:13)	Tell ed-Duweir 20 mi. SW of Jerusalem	<i>Law-keesh'</i> rhymes with Heb. <i>larekes</i> 'to the steeds' or 'team'; 'who live in team town harness the team to the chariot.'
Moresheh Gath (1:14a)	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, just as a father gives gifts to his daughter when she leaves home, so Judah must give parting gifts (tribute to Assyria) as she takes Moresheh Gath away.
Aczib' (1:14b)	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 (1:15a)	Tell Sandahanna In the foothills of Judah	<i>Mar-ay-shav</i> partially rhymes with Heb. 'conqueror' (<i>yav-rash</i> ; KJV "heir", NASB "one who takes possession"); <i>a conqueror against you who live in conqueror town.</i> '
Adullam (1:15b)	Tell-esh-Seikh-Madkur In Judah	1Sam.22:1; 2Sam.23:13 As David was driven to the cave of Adullam, so shall the officials of Judah be driven into hiding OR it could mean that high ranking Judah officials had to go to Adullam once Assyria invaded.

2:1-11 CRIMES AGAINST MANKIND & THE RESULTING JUDGMENT

VV.1-5 THE LAND IS GOD'S.⁸

Families are stewards & should not give it up to others but if they do, then on the 50th year⁹ it should return to the family.

As they took from the weak so the strong (Assyrians) will take from them.

As they provided no relief to the poor, neither will they get any relief from the judgment of God.

VV.6-11 AN EVIL PEOPLE NEVER LACKS RELIGIOUS LEADERS THAT WILL JUSTIFY THEIR WICKEDNESS (v.6, 11).

God's truth is useful for those who love it (v.7) but repugnant to those who rebel (v.6)(c.f. 3:5-7).

They rob and defraud (v.8-9) (c.f. Isa.10:1-4) and so they will be robbed of their ill gotten wealth (v10).

2:12-13 GOD WILL RE-GATHER ISRAEL.

Israel will be re-gathered. An individual is brought forward named 'breaker,' 'king,' and 'Yaweh,'¹⁰ who will bring the scattered people home.

3:1-7 LEADERS WHO FEED OFF THEIR PEOPLE (ISAIAH 1:10-20; EZ.34).

⁶ 2Ki.18:17-35; 2Chron.32:1-23; Isa.36:2-37:38

⁷ This was a fortress city that Sennacherib claimed to have overwhelmed in his annals; ANET

⁸ Lev.25:23

⁹ After 7 cycles of 7 years (49) a festival of jubilee (lit. the year of the ram's horn) was celebrated during the 50th year (10th day of the 7th month when it coincided with the day of atonement). It is also known as the year of liberty. At this time lands reverted back to the original families and debt slaves were freed. See Lev.25:23-34.

¹⁰ "The Hebrew parallelism of the lines and terms in verse 13 requires that the "king" and "Yaweh" be regarded as one and the same" Kaiser, *Messiah in the Old Testament* p.151.

3:8-12 A DISASTER IS COMING UPON ISRAEL & JUDAH'S LEADERS & FALSE PROPHETS

Notice, there's no denunciation of Hezekiah just the other leaders of Judah.

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.

Some see this as the Assyrian army which was composed of many nations.

Others believe it to be an end-times prophecy like those in Joel 3, Zech.12, 14, Ez.38-39.

The decision is not obvious but important for the interpretation of 5:1.¹¹

This verse cannot be a reference to Christ because: Christ was never smitten in a siege; he was not struck on the face with a rod and alien enemies did not smite him his own people did that or it could be said that God did so but not an invading army (well, perhaps if referring to Rome).

If not Christ, then who received this humiliating blow?

If the earlier passage refers to Babylon then Jehoiachin or Zedekiah are in view.

If it refers to Assyria, then Hezekiah is the injured/insulted ruler.

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.

The messiah will have the following features: he will be for God as Israel's ruler; his goings out are from the days of eternity and he will usher in a new age of peaceful rule.¹²

CHAPTERS 6-7 ISRAEL'S PRESENT REBELLION & GOD'S PLANS.

6:1-5 GOD'S DISPUTE WITH ISRAEL (c.f. Isaiah 1);

They are his people regardless of their sin (vv2,3,5);

God asks, rhetorically, whether he had contributed to their infidelity (c.f. Isa.43:22-28; Jer.2:31);

He asks them to recall that nobody could curse them unless they brought that curse on themselves through rebellion (can you act detestably and then expect to be safe from me? Jer.7:9-11).¹³

Some translations insert the phrase, *remember your journey*, but the insertion isn't required to catch the gist of the passage - God was with them no matter what.

6:6-8 WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO PLEASE GOD? - burnt offerings, yearling calves, thousands of rams, rivers of olive oil, the firstborn¹⁴?

Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God - that is what pleases God.¹⁵

6:9-16 YOU WILL LOSE EVERYTHING FOR YOUR LACK OF REPENTANCE¹⁶

¹¹ The Hebrew chapter division is probably correct in keeping 5:1 with chapter 4.

¹² The peace will, however, be imposed by the Messiah, his empowerment of his people (5:5-9) and by his final elimination of idolatry and warfare (5:10-15).

¹³ When camped near Shittim prior to entering Canaan, the Moabite king, Balak hired the prophet Balaam to curse Israel. But every time he opened his mouth a blessing came out. Balaam pointed out that he could not curse anyone God blessed but advised Balak to seduce Israel away from Yahweh using sexually active & pagan women. If God wouldn't abandon them then they needed to be persuaded to abandon God. It worked! God sent a curse in the form of a plague. When they entered Canaan they were weakened but re-committed to God and thus victorious at Gilgal.

¹⁴ The firstborn, man or beast, belonged to God (Ex.13:2,12). Human sacrifice is forbidden (Lev.18:21; 20:2-5; De.12:31; 18:10).

¹⁵ He's not negating the need for sacrifice. After all, substitutionary atonement was God's idea. He's negating sacrifice without repentance (Isa.1:10-18; Ps.50:7-23). Sacrifice should be the outworking of repentance not the substitute for repentance (see Jer.7:9-11).

¹⁶ 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.

7:1-7 MICAH CONFESSES THE SIN OF HIS PEOPLE;

The moral tone was so poor that there was no fidelity even within families.

He finishes this section by watching, not for the judgment but the salvation of God.

How did he know it was coming (v.20) because God had promises to keep and will never fail to keep his promises.

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)

The two great commandments are to love the Lord God with all your soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself (Mt.22:34-40 & Mk.12:28-34).

Israel, now Judah was failing miserably at both. They excelled in ceremony and ritual but fell short on the greater things.

We can make the same blunders. We read our Bibles, show up to our meetings, take classes but are cold inside - cold toward God and those around us. Don't forget the important things.

HUNGER AFTER TRUTH (1:6-11)

No one likes to have his or her sins exposed but the wise person is teachable.¹⁷

DO NOT MISREPRESENT GOD (2:6; 3:5-8)

See 1Tim.4:1f & 2Tim.4:1-5; James 3:1

SET YOUR HOPE ON GOD (4:1-5; 5:2-15; 7:8-20)

Counting on God to come through with his promises and anticipating those promises produces peace, stability and motivation for character change.

This is the mark of the godly person. See 1Thes.5:8; 1Pet.1:3,13,21; 1Jn.3:3

NAHUM - JUDGMENT AGAINST ASSYRIA

NAHUM (LIT. CONSOLATION) IS UNKNOWN TO THE REST OF THE TORAH. EVEN HIS BIRTHPLACE, ELKOSH IS UNCERTAIN.¹⁸

NAHUM'S SOLE MESSAGE IS THAT GOD WOULD DESTROY THE DESTROYER OF ISRAEL & SCOURGE OF JUDAH - ASSYRIA.

This occurred in 612 BC when a Babylonian/Median army marched through a breach in the wall of Nineveh and destroyed the capital (c.f. the prophecy in 2:6).

There was an old prophecy that Nineveh should not be taken till the river become an enemy with the city. And in the third year of the siege, the river being swollen with continual rains overflowed every part of the city and broke down the wall for twenty furlongs. Then the king [of Nineveh] thinking that the oracle was fulfilled and the river became an enemy of the city, built a large funeral pile in the palace and collected together all his wealth and his concubines and his eunuchs, burnt himself and the palace with them all. And the enemy entered at the breach that the waters had made and took the city. Diodorus Siculus, an ancient Greek historian

DATING 663-627 BC

¹⁷ A wise person has God front & center in their life. See Proverbs 9:7-9; 10:8; 12:1,15; 13:1, 20; 16:2; 17:10; 29:1

¹⁸ Some identify it with a town 24 miles north of Ninevah.

There is a tomb there said to be that of Nahum but this tradition dates from the 1500's AD and is dubious for textual reasons - this doesn't read like an Assyrian text.

Jerome, who translated the Vulgate, identified it with Capernaum (lit. the village of nahum/consolation) a town in Galilee but Israel was trashed at this point, so it's not clear what villages still stood.

Still others believe it was a village in southern Judah (Beit-Jebrin) because 'el qos' may be a reference to the Edomite deity Qos. See <http://www.tau.ac.il/taunews/97spring/edom.html>

NAHUM IS ORDERED 7TH IN THE DODECAPROPHETON OF THE TORAH AND EXCEPT FOR THE LXX IT IS ALWAYS PLACED AFTER MICAH AND BEFORE HABBAKKUK.

ASSYRIA IS APPARENTLY STRONG AT THE TIME OF THIS WRITING AND SO IT WAS LIKELY WRITTEN BEFORE 612 BC WHEN ASSYRIA FELL TO BABYLON and probably before the Medo-Babylonian coalition began to beat her down following the death of Ashurbanipal.¹⁹

Some date Nahum to a time around the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib in 701 BC but this fails to explain the comments in 3:9 about the captivity of Thebes,²⁰ which the Assyrians accomplished in 663 BC (38 years later) under Ashurbanipal.

Thus, Nahum was probably written after 663 but before 627.

MESSAGE

1:1-7 THE GOD OF WHITE-HOT ANGER

EVERY HEBREW WORDS FOR WRATH AND ANGER APPEAR IN VV.2-6 INCLUDING: JEALOUS²¹, VENGEANCE, WRATH, ANGER²², INDIGNATION²³, FIERCENESS²⁴, FURY²⁵.

God is slow to anger (v.3a) but when the objects of his patience prove incorrigible he acts quickly and with stunning fury.

God is the protector & provider for those who trust him but a nightmare for the wicked (v.7f).

1:8-2:2 FOR ASSYRIA – DESTRUCTION; FOR JUDAH - REST

1:12-13 For Judah - Assyrian oppression will end.

1:14 For Assyria - the end of the line.

1:15 Judah will finally have relief from oppression.

2:1 Assyria will be invaded

2:2 Israel will be destroyed

2:3-3:19 ASSYRIA WILL BE UTTERLY DEMOLISHED.²⁶

3:1 This is a city built on bloodshed...but it's own blood will be shed.

3:4 It is a harlot and a sorcerer. 85 different gods are named in the tablets unearthed from the city of Mari.

3:5 It was an Assyrian practice to parade their defeated enemies naked before the people.

3:9 Cush, Put & Libya are associated with the Egyptian ally Ethiopia.

APPLICATIONS

WE MUST SUBMIT TO GOD'S PLANS.

There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord. Prov.21:30 (re: Assyria) Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us. Isa.8:10

GOD IS PATIENT BUT WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, HE WILL JUDGE.

Isa.48:9; 2Pet.3:9

Judgment is God's "strange work" (Ezek. 18:23, 32)

Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." (Exodus 34:6,7)

BTW this is not saying that God punishes descendants for the sins of their ancestors; It is saying that God will note and take appropriated response to the pattern of sin set up by the fathers.²⁷

¹⁹ He reigned from 668 until his death in 627 BC. After this Assyria declined rapidly.

²⁰ No-Amon (lit. town of Amon) is the Hebrew name for the town.

²¹ Meaning zealous; completely committed

²² lit. heavy or hot breathing

²³ lit. foaming at the mouth

²⁴ lit. heat

²⁵ lit. burning

²⁶ See Isaiah 10:5-19 concerning God's use and judgment of Assyria and Isa.37 concerning Sennacherib's fall.

ZEPHANIAH - GOD IS SOVEREIGN

ZEPHANIAH'S NAME MEANS either, *the Lord hides* or *HE WHOM THE LORD HIDES*.

AN UNUSUALLY EXTENSIVE GENEALOGY APPEARS IN 1:1 TO SHOW THAT ZEPHANIAH WAS THE GREAT, GREAT GRANDSON OF HEZEKIAH.

At 20-25 years/generation the Hezekiah named must be king Hezekiah. Nahum, Habakkuk and Jeremiah were probably contemporaries of Zephaniah.

ZEPHANIAH WROTE DURING THE REIGN OF THE LAST RIGHTEOUS RULER OF JUDAH - JOSIAH.

When only eighteen years old, Josiah stumbled across a scroll of the Torah, read it and with amazing resolve sought to restore Judah to God.²⁸

This is a sort of Readers Digest version of Isaiah 13-23 OR the whole Bible in miniature.

- no hope for us who deserve the wrath of God (1:2; 3:5
note: if we don't get this point the last two points won't mean much.
- a glimmer of hope that God will save us from himself (i.e. his righteous judgment; the one we need to be saved from, saves us) (2:1
- a certain hope that God will not only save but fully love us

DATING 640-612

Since Josiah reigned from 640-609 BC and since 2:13 indicates that Ninevah had not yet fallen,²⁹ then Zephaniah likely wrote between 640 and 612 BC.

He probably wrote prior to the decline following the death of Ashurbanipal in 627 and so, with less certainty, Zephaniah could be dated c.640-622 BC.

MESSAGE

RELIGION OF THE TIME IS MIXED. THERE IS BAAL, ASHTORETH, MOLECH WORSHIP AND SABEANISM³⁰ 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.

The remnant of Baal will be cut off, including cult objects, priests, and even those with Baal names.³¹

The reference to stepping over the threshold (1:9) is to a tradition of the priests of Dagon after God toppled the Philistine idol onto the threshold of the temple of Dagon.³²

God will also judge the complacent who doubt God will do anything good or bad. They are complacent because all their time is spent accumulating wealth - money is their idol.

2:4-15 A DAY OF YAHWEH AGAINST THE NATIONS

2:4-8 (**West**) Philistines (Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron) will be uprooted and given to a remnant of Judah.

2:9-11 (**East**) Moab & Ammon has mocked God but he heard them. They will be destroyed and a remnant of Judah will take their lands.

²⁷ Scripture explicitly states that God won't hold children responsible for the sins of their parents: not in the New Covenant (Jer. 31:29-30), or under the Old Covenant (Ezekiel 18:14-20, especially v. 20). Each person is responsible for their own sin. Since the pattern of the parents sets the stage for the pattern of the children, however, it may be that generations will reach points of no return and God will act. Note also, Moses is comparing the LONG duration (a thousand generations) of God's lovingkindness toward those who love him to the comparatively SHORT time (3-4 generations) that he spends "visiting iniquity" on those who hate him.

²⁸ 2Ki.22:1; 2Chron.34:1-35:25; Josiah fulfilled a rare naming prophecy by destroying the altar at Bethel (1Ki.13).

²⁹ It fell in 612 BC

³⁰ 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

³¹ In Israel, names end in Yah (short for Yaweh). Caananites would end in Baal (Jerembaal instead of Jeremiah).

³² 1Sam.4-5

2:10 (**South**) Ethiopia will also be destroyed.³³

2:11-15 (**North**) Assyria will be destroyed. Assyria's pride brings this judgment. They think of themselves in god-like terms when they say, *I am and there is no one besides me.*³⁴

If I destroy all those around you...will you escape?

Turn to the one you need to escape from and he will save you.

3:1-20 GOD WILL PURGE (1-8, 11-13), CLEANSE (9,12-13) AND RESTORE (10, 19-20);

We will fellowship in the sense that we serve God shoulder to shoulder (v.9b).

APPLICATION

GOD'S GRACE - WE DON'T JUST ESCAPE DEVASTATION, HE DELIGHTS IN US.

What do you imagine? That he'll look at us and say, "Well, what are ya gonna do? It is what it is."

"On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me." **3:11**

"The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing". **3:17**

One day, Jesus, having paid our debt himself will fall on our neck kissing us like the father who ran to his prodigal son. Then you will see with your own eyes how excited God is to be with you forever.

HABAKKUK - HISTORY IS IN THE HANDS OF GOD.

HABAKKUK'S NAME MEANS, 'TO EMBRACE.'

There is little information about him outside this book. In the apocryphal book, *Bel and the Dragon*, God transported Habakkuk to Daniel while he was in the lion's den to comfort him there but this is not very useful.

HABAKKUK IS AN ADMIRABLE MAN BECAUSE HE IS HONEST WITH GOD.

He wrestles with God by asking hard questions but he also listens to God's response.

When God's response is unclear to him, he stands firmly with God anyway.

Like Jonah, this book is a much more personal look at the author's relationship with God.

This period is a tragic replay of the end of Israel's history 125 years earlier.

Social injustice and idolatry abounded. God's sovereignty was soon to be displayed - unfortunately it was to be displayed in judgment against Judah.

DATING 608-597 (THE LAST DAYS OF JUDAH)

His times are characterized by social oppression in Judah. It is thought by most that Jehoiakim was Judah's king at this time.

MESSAGE

The whole book is a dialog between Habakkuk and God: Habakkuk complains, God responds; Habakkuk complains again, God again responds.

After this, in chapter 3, Habakkuk responds in song and poetry (i.e. complete with musical instruction).

CH1:2-4 LORD, WHY DON'T YOU ACT?

The land is full of *chamas* (unjust violence) but you do nothing, you tolerate evil. Wicked people dominate this culture.

The Law is paralyzed - lit. *the Law has become numb.*

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)

Will Habakkuk trust a God who does not explain His actions?

God does not apologize and sometimes does not explain.

CH.2:4-19 FIVE WOES

WOE TO THE ARROGANT BIG SPENDER - Babylon has spread herself too thin

³³ Ez.30:4-9 also predicted this.

³⁴ Isa.44:6-7

WOE TO THE UNJUST GAINERS - who gain at the expense of others but who are really hurting themselves.

WOE TO THE VIOLENT BUILDERS - Babylon was founded on violence; Babylon and Assyria were right in the middle of God's plan and there's no evidence they understood it.

WOE TO THOSE WHO DELIGHT IN THE JUDGMENT OF ANOTHER.

Babylon was a strategic instrument God used to judge many nations...The cup of God's wrath.

They are taking God's cup of wrath to each nation but the cup is coming back around to Babylon itself.

WOE TO THE IDOLATORS

CH.3 HABAKKUK'S HYMN - "O.K. Lord"

A highly emotional hymn (*shigionote*) we don't really know what this means.

LORD, I FEAR YOUR REPORT.

IN WRATH, REMEMBER MERCY;

He cannot argue they don't deserve the judgment because he's already admitted they do;

He cannot ask God to not judge because God has already said it will surely happen;

He simply says - *In wrath, remember mercy.*

We are sinful people but we are your sinful people.

Mercy is the withholding of just punishment.

He doesn't say withhold justice he asks God to not give them the full measure of all they deserve.

Judge, but hold back from giving it all to us or we would cease to exist.

HE DESCRIBES GOD'S MAJESTY.

HE DESCRIBES GOD'S JUSTICE (8-12)

3:16-19 THE KEY TO THE WHOLE BOOK - I WILL TRUST YOU REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

APPLICATIONS

GOD IS SOVEREIGN

Do you admit it? Does your behavior show it?

Grateful confidence about everything.

Adopting His priorities

WE MUST BE WILLING TO WRESTLE WITH GOD.

Habakkuk knew that only God could do anything about the injustice.

When you are bothered by injustice, do you go to God - If not, why?

Some decide to take it on apart from God (e.g. social justice apart from the gospel)

Some are more interested in getting human sympathy than God's perspective.

So, it doesn't occur to them to seek God.

Others may doubt God's sovereignty or his love.

They don't want to hear from God b/c it's clear to them that He's unreliable.

Perhaps your experience of injustice has left your life with God impoverished.

Maybe you're disappointed or embittered with others - ultimately with God himself.

You need to engage God the way that Habakkuk engages God.

You may be startled at the answers you get but you'll never be able to say that no answer came or that the answer you got was inadequate.

WE MUST TRUST GOD DESPITE CIRCUMSTANCES.

God has a purpose, even when you cannot see it.

When we are in a tight spot we think we know what God would do.

The truth is, we don't know what God would do.

Unbelief doesn't come from God's behavior...rather from God's behavior not aligning with our expectations.

Dates for these prophets

Judah is exiled

Isaiah

Jeremiah & Lamentations

Daniel

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

- Read Daniel, Ezra & Nehemiah³⁵
- 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 major sins amongst the remnant of Israel?
 2. Identify one major theme for each of the three prophets.

³⁵ Read through the material quickly, just to familiarize yourself with these periods.