

LESSON 49

Nahum; Habakkuk; Zephaniah

OVERVIEW:

(Nahum was a contemporary of Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah (see “The Kings and the Prophets of Israel and Judah,” p. 232 in this manual). He prophesied in Judah sometime between 663 and 612 B.C. His entire recorded message prophesies the destruction of Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. This prophecy also serves as a type of the destruction of the wicked in the last days. Nineveh had received a warning to repent through the prophet Jonah more than one hundred years earlier. The people of Nineveh at that time repented and were spared (see Jonah 3). However, by the time of Nahum’s ministry, Nineveh had become wicked again and this time would not escape the Lord’s judgment. The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel about 721 B.C. and carried its inhabitants into captivity (see enrichment section D in *Old Testament Student Manual: 1 Kings–Malachi*, pp. 113–16). From that time on the Assyrians were a constant threat to the survival of Judah as well. Nahum’s prophecy of the destruction of Assyria, written in beautiful Hebrew poetry, must have been a source of hope and comfort to the people of Judah. Nahum’s name means “consoler” (see Bible Dictionary, “Nahum,” p. 736). His promise was that Jehovah would one day bring “comfort” to Israel. Teacher’s Manual, 208)

(“The date of Nahum’s activities has to be deduced from certain statements made in the prophecy. In Chapter 3:8–10 reference is made to the destruction of the city of No-Amon, the Egyptian Thebes, as an already *The Way of the Sphinx at ancient Thebes* accomplished fact. We know Thebes was captured by Assurbanipal, the Assyrian, in 663 B.C. Therefore, Nahum’s prophecy must have been written after that date. And since Nahum’s prophecy deals with the coming destruction of Nineveh, we know it must have been written before 612 B.C., the date of her downfall. We may date Nahum’s ministry with some degree of probability, therefore, between the years 663 B.C. and 612 B.C.” (Sidney B. Sperry, *The Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, p. 353.))

(Habakkuk most probably served his ministry after the appearance of the Chaldeans in world history. Many scholars believe that he wrote after the battle of Carchemish in which Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians in 605 B.C. and before the first deportation of the Jews in 597 B.C. From his writing it is also believed he lived in Jerusalem. (See James Hastings, ed., *A Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Habakkuk.”) If this is the case, then he was a contemporary of Lehi and Jeremiah, prophesying to the same people. Nothing is known about the man himself other than what may be inferred from his writings. The traditional material that has filtered down concerning him is evidently legendary and cannot be comfortably relied upon. It is known that he was a great prophet who left “one of the noblest and most penetrating words in the history of religion” (J. R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 587).)

(Zephaniah was probably a contemporary of Jeremiah, Lehi, Nahum, and possibly Habakkuk. “The immediate occasion of his preaching appears to have been the advance of an enemy which threatened Judah and its neighbours with sudden and complete destruction. Evidently the dreaded foe is not their old masters, the Assyrians, nor their allies, the Egyptians, but the barbarous Scythians, who had already disturbed the politics of southwestern Asia. . . . A detachment of these ruthless foes, who worshipped their swords and gloried only in murder and plunder, was evidently already sweeping down the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. The prophet had his text, and his audience good reason to listen. Their old complacency was shaken. The awakened national conscience found expression on the lips of the royal prophet. Rising above the terror of the moment, he announced that these pitiless destroyers were

Jehovah's instrument of punishment, and the catastrophe that threatened His day of judgment." (J. R. Dummelow, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, pp. 592–93.) C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch pointed out that Zephaniah used the imminent danger to stress the universal nature of God's judgment: "Zephaniah's prophecy has a more general character, embracing both judgment and salvation in their totality, so as to form one complete picture. It not only commences with the announcement of a universal judgment upon the whole world, out of which the judgment rises that will fall upon Judah on account of its sins, and upon the world of nations on account of its hostility to the people of Jehovah; but it treats throughout of the great and terrible day of Jehovah, on which the fire of the wrath of God consumes the whole earth [Zephaniah 1:14–18; 2:2; 3:8]." (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10:2:122.) Such a message has meaning for people today as the world prepares for its spiritual and temporal judgment.)

SCRIPTURES:

NAHUM CHAPTER 1

Nahum speaks of the burning of the earth at the Second Coming, and of the mercy and power of the Lord.

1 THE burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. ("Nahum was a poet. When he saw in vision the end of Assyria, he poured forth in unrestrained and picturesque Hebrew the relief felt by his people. In many ways his poetry vents the wrath, sighs the relief, and bespeaks the hope of all who have been oppressed when the oppressions at last have ceased and the oppressor is no more. But Nahum was also a prophet; and he saw in Assyria's downfall an example of the hand of God in justice reaping with a vengeance all the enemies of good, while He preserves in mercy and with patience those who try to do good. . . . "Envisioning the overthrow of this cruel and mighty empire, whose kings in their own records boast of the captives they have maimed, the realms they have subjected and the treasures they have confiscated, Nahum tells how the doom of the mighty and the wicked is decreed, deserved, and done. "His book begins with an acrostic, with one strophe (stanza) for each of the first fifteen letters of the Hebrew alphabet, with two alterations of the sequence. The first seven strophes (verses 2–5 in English) emphasize God's power over nature and over His enemies; but the third (verse 3a) interrupts to tell of His goodness and justice. The second seven strophes emphasize His power over all enemies and evils, but again tells by contrast in the third of the series (verse 7) of His goodness and His mercy to those who take refuge in Him. The fifteenth and final strophe (verse 10) provides a summary and a transition to the next subject to be treated: the castigation of Nineveh. "Assyria and Judah are alternately addressed in the next poem (verses 11–14); the one is to be punished and the other to be redeemed. It concludes with a hopeful verse, speaking of a peaceful age in terms that seem to herald the Messianic age when all oppressors shall have ceased." (Ellis T. Rasmussen, "Nahum, a Poet-Prophet," *Instructor*, Aug. 1962, insert between pp. 270–71.)

2 God *is* jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and *is* furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies.

3 The LORD *is* ^aslow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the* ^bwicked: the LORD *hath* his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of his feet.

4 He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.

5 The mountains quake at him, and the hills ^amelt, and the earth *is* ^bburned at his ^cpresence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

6 Who can stand before his ^aindignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

7 The LORD *is* ^agood, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that ^btrust in him.

8 But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

9 What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.

10 For while *they be* folden together *as* thorns, and while they are drunken *as* drunkards, they shall be devoured as ^astubble fully dry.

11 There is *one* come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor.

12 Thus saith the LORD; Though *they be* quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more.

13 For now will I break his ^ayoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder. (Still prophesying of Judah's future, Nahum spoke of one very "wicked counsellor" whose yoke upon Judah, probably a large yearly tribute (see 2 Kings 17:14), was to be broken. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had invaded Judah with a force of nearly two hundred thousand men. The prophecy foretold that Sennacherib would die shortly, and the house of his gods would become his grave (see Nahum 1:14). While he was worshipping in the temple dedicated to the god Nisrock, Sennacherib's two sons, Adrammelech and Sharazer, murdered their father as Nahum had prophesied (see 2 Kings 19:37). Institute Manual, 230)

14 And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, *that* no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.

15 Behold upon the mountains the ^afeet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

CHAPTER 2

Nineveh shall be destroyed, which is a type of what shall be in the latter days.

1 HE that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, ^awatch the way, make *thy* loins strong, fortify *thy* power mightily.

2 For the LORD hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches.

3 The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men *are* in scarlet: the chariots *shall be* with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the ^afir trees shall be terribly shaken.

4 The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings.

5 He shall recount his ^aworthies: (Heb nobles, leaders) they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared.

6 The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.

7 And ^aHuzzab (or the queen) shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead *her* as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts.

8 But Nineveh *is* of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, *shall they cry*; but none shall look back.

9 Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for *there is* none end of the store *and* glory out of all the pleasant furniture.

10 She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain *is* in all loins, and the faces of them all gather ^ablackness. (Heb idiom meaning gloom)

11 Where *is* the dwelling of the lions, and the feedingplace of the young lions, where the lion, *even* the old lion, walked, *and* the lion's whelp, and none made *them* afraid?

12 The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ^aravin. (Heb torn flesh)

13 Behold, I *am* against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard. (In these verses Nahum wrote a taunting hymn of grief at the fall of Nineveh. “Where,” he asked, “is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions?” (v. 11). This is like saying, Where are those ferocious ones who once discomfited and attacked my people? “I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard” (v. 13). Institute Manual, 230)

CHAPTER 3

The miserable downfall of Nineveh is foretold.

1 WOE to the bloody city! it *is* all full of lies *and* robbery; the prey departeth not;

2 The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots.

3 The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and *there is* a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and *there is* none end of *their* corpses; they stumble upon their corpses:

4 Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts.

5 Behold, I *am* against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame.

6 And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock.

7 And it shall come to pass, *that* all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee? (These verses pronounce the worst of woes on Nineveh, “the bloody city” (v. 1). She was a harlot, wicked in the extreme, and her punishments were merited because she was a “mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms” (v. 4). In other words, she not only turned to wickedness herself but exported that wickedness to many others through her power and influence. Institute Manual, 230)

8 Art thou better than ^apopulous No (Heb No-amon; ie Thebes), that was situate among the rivers, *that had* the waters round about it, whose rampart *was* the sea, *and* her ^bwall (ie defense) *was* from the sea?

9 Ethiopia and Egypt *were* her strength, and *it was* ^ainfinite; (Heb without limit) ^bPut and ^cLubim (ie the Libyans) were thy helpers.

10 Yet *was* she carried away, she went into captivity: her young ^achildren also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.

11 Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy. (As other wicked cities had met destruction, so would Nineveh. She was no better than the Egyptian city, No-Amon (Thebes), which was earlier destroyed by Assurbanipal, king of Assyria. Neither of the allies of Thebes, Ethiopia or Libya, had been able to protect her. Nineveh, too, would “seek strength” in allies and find none. Institute Manual, 230)

12 All thy strong holds *shall be like* fig trees with the firstripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.

13 Behold, thy people in the midst of thee *are* ^awomen: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars.

14 Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln.

15 There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts.

16 Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and flieth away.

17 Thy crowned *are* as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, *but* when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they *are*.

18 Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell *in the dust*: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth *them*.

19 *There is* no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the ^abruit (Heb report) of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually? (“Nahum’s message is still true: decadence ends in destruction. Although the Lord is ‘slow to anger,’ He is also ‘great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.’ His mercy shall not rob justice, but neither will justice rob His mercy. ‘The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.’” (“Nahum, a Poet-Prophet,” insert between pp. 270–71.))

HABAKKUK CHAPTER 1

When Habakkah learned that the Lord raised up the Chaldeans to overrun the land of Israel, he was troubled that the wicked could be thus employed.

1 THE burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

2 O LORD, ^ahow long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! *even* cry out unto thee *of*^bviolence, and thou wilt not save! (Ellis T. Rasmussen described Habakkuk’s dilemma in this way. “Habakkuk’s miseries likely arose in the days of Judah’s degeneration, after the time of Assyria’s conquest of northern Israel, and before the time when Babylonia came to carry the remaining tribe, Judah, away into captivity. The religious reforms of Hezekiah in his century, and those of Josiah a hundred years later (about 620 B.C.) had put the just and the right at the helm in Judah for a time. But as always, resurgent corruption in politics, in morals, and in religion swiftly reappeared when the champions of right were gone. “Religious compromises, induced by the desires of the liberal and the libertine, ever seeking to soften the restrictions and responsibilities of Israel’s covenant faith brought derision and persecution upon the ‘pious’ and the ‘faithful.’ Under these conditions Jeremiah suffered, and it is likely that this was also the setting of Habakkuk’s ministry. “Thus it is that he cries out against the iniquity, grievance, spoiling, violence, strife, and contention on every side, for the processes of justice and execution of the law seem endlessly delayed when the righteous are encompassed about by the wicked.” (“Habakkuk, a Prophet with a Problem,” *Instructor*, Sept. 1962, insert between pp. 306–7.))

3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause *me* to behold grievance^(s)? for spoiling and violence *are* before me: and there are *that* raise up ^astrife and contention.

4 Therefore the law ^ais slacked (Heb grows cold), and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

5 ¶ Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for *I* will work a ^awork in your days, *which* ye will not believe, though it be told *you*.

6 For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, *that* bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces *that are* not theirs.

7 They *are* terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity ^ashall proceed of themselves. (or are of their own making)

8 Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle *that* hasteth to eat.

9 They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up *as* the east wind, and they shall gather ^athe captivity (or captives) as the sand.

10 And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it.

11 Then shall *his* ^amind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, *imputing* this his power unto his god.

12 ¶ *Art* thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.

13 *Thou art* of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, *and* holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth *the man that is* more righteous than he?

14 And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, *that have* no ruler over them?

15 They take up all of them with the ^aangle, (or hook) they catch them in their net, and gather them in their ^bdrag (or net): therefore they rejoice and are glad.

16 Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion *is* fat, and their meat plenteous.

17 **Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?** (Habakkuk's lament is one that has been raised by many: Why does the Lord allow wicked people and nations to operate, and why are they allowed, in some cases, to punish God's people? Habakkuk did not mention the Babylonians (Chaldeans) in his question (see vv. 1–4), but it is obvious from the Lord's answer that they were the ones of whom Habakkuk was thinking. The Lord replied that He intended to use the Chaldeans for His righteous purposes in such a way that it would be difficult for Habakkuk to believe it (see vv. 5–6). The Lord's response merely increased Habakkuk's confusion: how could God condone the cruelties of a nation more wicked than Judah? Were the Chaldeans never to get what was due them for their evil ways? Habakkuk's faith was being tested. Institute Manual, 227)

CHAPTER 2

The Lord admonishes patience, and promises that the just shall live by faith—The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God—Idols have no power.

1 I WILL stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

2 And the LORD answered me, and said, ^aWrite the vision, and make *it* plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

3 For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely ^acome, it will not tarry.

4 Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his ^afaith. (Heb **faithfulness, steadfastness**) (Sperry wrote that this verse “is one of the great passages of the Old Testament. It means essentially this: There is a moral and spiritual distinction between the Chaldeans and the people of Judah. The Chaldeans, puffed up and arrogant, priding themselves in their wealth and power and deceptive in their dealings with other nations, do not possess the moral and spiritual elements which alone can insure permanence and stability. The people of the Lord, on the other hand, [should] possess moral integrity, fidelity, and spiritual insight which insure for them a future. ‘The future belongs to the righteous.’ When the prophet says that ‘the righteous shall live by his faith (more accurately faithfulness)’ he implies permanency.” (*Voice of Israel's Prophets*, pp. 371–72.))

5 ¶ Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, *he is* a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and *is* as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:

6 Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth *that which is* not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!

7 Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for ^abooties (or plunder, spoil) unto them?

8 Because thou hast ^aspoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and *for* the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

9 ¶ Woe to him that ^acoveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!

10 Thou hast ^aconsulted (or devised) shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned *against* thy soul.

11 For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and ^athe beam out of the timber shall answer it. (or a rafter out of the woodwork will witness it.)

12 ¶ Woe to him that buildeth a town with ^ablood, (Heb bloodshed) and stablisheth a city by iniquity!

13 Behold, *is it* not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very ^avanity?

14 For the ^aearth shall be filled with the ^bknowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

15 ¶ Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to *him*, and makest *him* ^adrunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!

16 Thou art filled ^awith shame for glory (or more with shame than with glory): drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing *shall be* on thy glory.

17 For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, *which* made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

18 ¶ What profiteth the graven ^aimage that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?

19 Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it *is* laid over with gold and silver, and *there is* no breath at all in the midst of it.

20 But the LORD *is* in his holy temple: let all the earth keep ^asilence before him.

CHAPTER 3

In his prayer Habakkuk trembles at the majesty of God.

1 A PRAYER of Habakkuk the prophet upon ^aShigionoth. (a type of poetry) (A *shigionoth* may have been a stringed instrument, or perhaps a musical expression used to accompany singers. Possibly this prayer of Habakkuk was set to music and intended for use in the temple. A *selah* was a cue for the person singing or chanting the words. The use of this word in Psalms is further evidence that Habakkuk's prayer may have been set to music. Institute Manual, 228. This psalm is easily divided into four parts. 1. Introduction (1-2), 2. The divine manifestation (or theophany) of the past (3-7), 3. The conflict between God and the forces of the earth (8-15, 4. An affirmation of faith in the Lord (16-19))

2 O LORD, I have heard thy speech, *and* was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; *in wrath remember mercy*.

3 God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount ^aParan. (This alludes to historic occasions when the Lord miraculously delivered the people) Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

4 And *his* brightness was as the light; ^ahe had horns *coming* out of his hand (or rays of light are at his side): and there *was* the hiding of his power.

5 Before him went the pestilence, and ^aburning coals (Heb a flame) went forth at his feet.

6 He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual ^ahills did bow: his ways *are* everlasting.

7 I saw the tents of ^aCushan (Historic allusions as in v.3) in affliction: *and* the curtains of the land of ^bMidian did tremble.

8 Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? *was* thine anger against the rivers? *was* thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses *and* thy chariots of salvation?

9 Thy bow was made quite naked, *according* to the oaths of the tribes, *even* thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.

10 The ^amountains saw thee, *and* they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, *and* lifted up his hands on high.

11 The ^asun *and* moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, *and* at the shining of thy glittering spear.

12 Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.

13 Thou wentest forth for the ^asalvation of thy people, *even* for salvation with thine anointed; thou ^bwoundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.

14 Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing *was* as to devour the poor secretly.

15 Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, *through* the ^aheap of great waters.

16 When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.

17 ¶ Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls:

18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

19 The LORD God *is* my ^astrength, and he will make my feet like hinds' *feet*, and he will make me to walk upon mine ^bhigh places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments. (The entire chapter is excellent Hebrew poetry. Habakkuk makes a number of references to events of Moses and Joshua's time. Anyone familiar with those biblical events will recognize the ones alluded to. The burden of Habakkuk's prayer is for Jehovah to return and sustain Israel as in days of old. This He will surely do in the latter days. Habakkuk's trust was fully in God. Rasmussen said of Habakkuk's song of praise: "After [his] experience, Habakkuk felt inspired to utter a psalm of praise to God and trust in Him. In awe at the powers and glory of God, he poetically describes the power of Deity over all facets and functions of nature, and speaks of His might to overcome all of His enemies. Then in the spirit expressed also by Job who said, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him: . . .,' Habakkuk lists in six poetic lines the disasters that could come to him, but strongly he avers in his last five lines: *Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places . . .* "It is for this trust in God in spite of the vicissitudes of life that Habakkuk's message is for us also today a wholesome stimulant." ("Habakkuk, a Prophet with a Problem," insert between pp. 306–7.))

ZEPHANIAH CHAPTER 1

The destruction of Judah is a type of the Second Coming—It is the day of the Lord's sacrifice, a day of wrath and trouble.

1 THE word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of ^aJosiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. (Zephaniah was

commissioned by God to warn Judah and encourage her to repent. He was a contemporary of King Josiah, and his ministry probably played an important part in the reform movement of that time. Israel was at a pivotal point between peril and safety. Zephaniah's sweeping prose account of God's judgments upon the wicked and the eventual triumph of His kingdom was the message vacillating Judea needed to hear. The brief genealogy in verse one traces Zephaniah back to Hizkiah. It is not known whether this individual was the same as Hezekiah the king, and the other names are not of known individuals. Nothing is known of the life of Zephaniah beyond what can be inferred from his book. Institute Manual, 223)

2 I will utterly ^aconsume all *things* from off the land, saith the LORD.

3 I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the ^astumblingblocks (or idols) with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD.

4 I will also ^astretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, *and* the name of the ^bChemarims (Chemarim) (or idolatrous priests) with the priests;

5 And them that worship the host of heaven upon the ^ahousetops; and them that worship *and* that swear by the LORD, and that swear by ^bMalcham;

6 And them that are ^aturned back from the LORD; and *those* that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for him.

7 ^aHold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the ^bday of the LORD *is* at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.

8 And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange ^aapparel. (This prophecy is in keeping with the dualism so common in the writings of Hebrew prophets. Zephaniah both anticipated Judah's impending disaster and foresaw the final destruction of all the wicked (see Ellis T. Rasmussen, *An Introduction to the Old Testament and Its Teachings*, 2:273). The phrase "day of the Lord" in Zephaniah 1:7 usually refers in the scriptures to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Institute Manual, 223)

9 In the same day also will I punish all those that leap ^aon the threshold (or over; ie to plunder and pillage), which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit.

10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, *that there shall be* the noise of a cry from the fish ^agate, and an howling from ^bthe second, (ie the second quarter, a district of Jerusalem) and a great crashing from the hills. (The "fish gate" was on the north end of the city. People there would be the first to see an enemy invading from the north. The fish gate opened into the part of the city known as the "second quarter," probably because it was an expansion of the original city of David. This quarter would be the first reached from the north.)

11 Howl, ye inhabitants of ^aMaktesh, (ie a district of Jerusalem) for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off. ("Maktesh" was the name of the merchant quarter, which lay in the second quarter; thus, the reference to merchants, "they that bear silver.")

12 And it shall come to pass at that time, *that* I will search Jerusalem with candles, (To "search with candles" suggests an exhaustive search, since in the poorly lighted houses of those times one would have to use a candle to look for a lost object at night.) and punish the men that are ^asettled on their ^blees: (or complacent, indifferent) ("Settled upon their lees" (v. 12) is a figure drawn from wine making. The lees are the thick residue of the pulp of the grapes. "Good wine, when it remains for a long time upon its lees, becomes stronger; but bad wine becomes harsher and thicker" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:134). The interpretation of the symbol is that wicked men, like bad wine, remain apathetic about the true religion and become increasingly harsh and bitter.) that say in their heart, The LORD will ^cnot do good, neither will he do evil.

13 Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also ^abuild houses, but not inhabit *them*; and they shall ^bplant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.

14 The ^agreat day of the LORD *is* near, *it is* near, and hasteth greatly, *even* the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

15 That day *is* a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and ^adesolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

16 A day of the ^atrumpet (Heb *shofar* or ram's horn) and alarm against the ^bfenced cities, and against the high towers.

17 And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.

18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the ^afire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

CHAPTER 2

Seek righteousness; seek meekness—Judgment shall come upon the Philistines, Moab, the children of Ammon, the Ethiopians, and the Assyrians.

(Judah was not the only nation ripe for destruction. The foreign peoples who taunted and reviled Judah were even more worthy of annihilation. Each of them would share in the impending doom. Still, there was some hope. "Those who see the worst in human nature are often the first to see a gleam of hope. Following the gloom, unmitigated and unrelieved in any way, Zephaniah sends one shaft of light into the darkness. A remnant may yet be saved [see vv. 2–3]. He does not see any way of escape for any but for the *humble*, whom he mentions in contrast to the proud who have provoked the jealous wrath of God." (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 777.))

1 GATHER yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired;

2 Before the decree bring forth, *before* the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD's anger come upon you.

3 Seek ye the LORD, all ye ^ameek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek ^brighteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the ^cday of the LORD's anger.

4 ¶ For Gaza shall be forsaken, and ^aAshkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up.

5 Woe unto the inhabitants of the ^asea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the LORD *is* against you; O Canaan, the land of the ^bPhilistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant.

6 And the sea coast shall be ^adwellings (or pastures and meadows) *and* cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.

7 And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their ^acaptivity.

8 ¶ I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the ^arevilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and ^bmagnified *themselves* against their border.

9 Therefore *as* I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as ^aSodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, *even* ^bthe breeding of nettles (ie occupied by weeds and saltpits), and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.

10 This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified *themselves* against the people of the LORD of hosts.

11 The LORD *will be* ^aterrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and *men* shall ^bworship him, every one from his place, *even* all the isles of the ^cheathen.

12 ¶ Ye ^aEthiopians also, ye *shall be* slain by my sword.

13 And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy ^aAssyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, *and* dry like a wilderness.

14 And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the ^acormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; *their* voice shall sing in the windows; desolation *shall be* in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work.

15 This *is* the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I *am*, and *there is* none beside(s) me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, *and* ^awag his hand.

CHAPTER 3

At the Second Coming, all nations shall assemble to battle—Men shall have a pure language—The Lord shall reign in their midst.

1 WOE to her that is ^afilthy and polluted, to the oppressing city!

2 She ^aobeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God. (Zephaniah turned again to Jerusalem with both warning and promise. He condemned many groups in Judah's society, including the political leaders, the judges, the prophets, and the priests. Corruption was at every level. He stressed the constant righteousness and justice of the Lord, who continually brings down wicked people and nations. All hope was not to be lost, however, because there would still be a remnant with whom God could work and bring to pass His righteous purposes. In addition, there is always God's unbounded mercy. The righteous in any age can take comfort in their righteousness. Institute Manual, 224)

3 Her princes within her *are* roaring lions; her judges *are* evening ^awolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow.

4 Her prophets *are* ^alight (or wanton) *and* treacherous persons: her priests have ^bpolluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the ^claw. (Heb torah)

5 The just LORD *is* in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame.

6 I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant.

7 I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, *and* corrupted all their doings.

8 ¶ Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination *is* ^ato gather the ^bnations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, *even* all my fierce anger: for all the ^cearth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. (The prophet concluded on a note of optimism. The day will come when God's people "shall not see evil any more" (Zephaniah 3:15). Those who have borne the burden of reproach shall be gathered from afar and become "a name and a praise" (v. 20) among men. "Zephaniah saw our day and beyond. In it he both suffered and rejoiced. He suffered in spirit because of the desolation and destruction which he saw, but he was able to use this as a warning and threat to his own people. In the redemption and final blessings of Israel he saw a ray of hope to extend to Judah. No prophet has written more clearly or vigorously of the Day of the Lord. Zephaniah must be added to the list of prophets who give us a grave warning of disaster." (Sidney B. Sperry, *The Voice of Israel's Prophets*, p. 388.))

9 For then will I turn to the people a pure ^alanguage (Adamic), that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one ^bconsent.

10 From ^abeyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, *even* the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.

11 In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be ^ahaughty ^bbecause (Heb in) of my holy mountain.

12 I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD.

13 The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak ^alies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make *them* afraid.

14 ¶ Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. (In the last days, Israel will be gathered)

15 The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, *even* the LORD, *is* in the ^amidst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.

16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: *and to Zion*, Let not thine hands be slack.

17 The LORD thy God in the midst of thee *is* mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

18 I will gather *them that are* sorrowful for the solemn assembly, *who* are of thee, *to whom* the reproach of it was a burden.

19 Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that ^ahalteth (or is lame), and ^bgather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.

20 At that time will I bring you *again*, *even* in the time that I ^agather you: for I will make you a name and a ^bpraise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your ^ccaptivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.