

Weekend

1. Look up some background to the prophecies we've studied this week to put them in their context.

Micah

Jeremiah 26:17-19
2 Chronicles 30

Obadiah

Genesis 25:23; 27:39-41
2 Samuel 8:13-14
2 Kings 16:6
2 Chronicles 21:8-10
Ezekiel 35

Nahum and Zephaniah

Compare the prophecies relating to Assyria in Isaiah 10:24-34 and Jonah.

2. Make a chart showing the historical position of the four prophets you have studied. You will find dates in a Bible dictionary or commentary.

Notes



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Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes

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Week 23: Four Prophets: Micah, Nahum, Obadiah & Zephaniah (Whole book studies)

The prophets in the Old Testament had the often unpopular task of applying God's standards to the political, social and religious scene. This they did with devastating directness.

Micah's message, for example, was a mixture of doom because of impending judgment, together with hope, based on the certainty that God would continue to care for his people.

As you study these four prophets, imagine how you would have felt if you had been on the receiving end of their words.

To find out more about these men and their situations, use a Bible Dictionary. While it is better to read through the whole books, selected readings have sometimes been suggested in view of length.

Day 1. Message from the country

Micah 1:1-9; 5:10 - 7:1

Outline of book

God's judgment on Jerusalem and Samaria (chapters 1 - 3)

Future restoration and glory of the kingdom (chapters 4 - 5)

Contrast of prophetic and popular religion (chapter 6)

Message of warning and hope (chapter 7)

1. Read through the whole book, if you can, or at least Micah 1:1-9; 5:10 - 7:7 noticing the reasons for God's judgment.
2. What were some particular social injustices causing God's wrath? (Micah 2; 6:10-12) Think out some examples of religious hypocrisy in our society today which might similarly cause God's anger. What should be our response to these in the light of God's 'requirements'? (Micah 6:8)
3. Can you discover what God had against Israel's leaders, both secular and religious? (Micah 3; 7:3-4)

Let's pray specifically today for leaders both in our nation and in our churches 'that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness' (1 Timothy 2:2 NIV).

Memory verse: He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8 NIV).

Day 2. The faithfulness of God

Micah 5:1-4; 6:1-8; 7:8-20

We left Micah yesterday bemoaning the fate of his countrymen. Read the whole book through again or at least Micah 5:1-4; 6:1-8; 7:8-20, noticing what Micah says about the character of God.

1. Throughout the prophecy, Micah reminds the people of Israel what God is like. Jot down aspects of God's character he mentions. What difference does this make to their plight (5:4-5; 6:1-8; 7:18-20)?
2. Because God is merciful and faithful to his people, judgment gives way to hope. How does Micah see the fulfilment of God's promises to the people of Israel (Micah 7:8-20)? Look at the same verses again and see, in turn, what effect God's vindication of his people would have on the nations around Israel. Can you see ways in which God's dealings with us over-spill on to those around us?

Let's praise God for those aspects of his character highlighted in today's study. As we face circumstances that sometimes are overwhelming, let's thank God that he does not leave his people without hope.

Day 3. The downfall of Nineveh

Nahum

Nahum's message was about the destruction of Nineveh, the great capital city of Assyria, predicted by Jonah some 150 years before and confirmed by Zephaniah. The fulfilment of the prophecy was in 612 BC and today there is nothing left of Nineveh except a mound known as 'Tell Kuyunik' or the 'mound of many sheep'.

1. How does Nahum describe God in chapter 1:2-8 in relation to (a) his own people, and (b) his enemies?
2. Note the way Nahum describes Nineveh. He takes up various images to illustrate aspects of Nineveh's sin. Try to picture these images in your own mind. Why do you think Nahum uses them (Nahum 2:8,11-12; 3:1,4, 12)?
3. What clues do we get to the reasons for Nineveh's fall? (Nahum 1:11,14; 3:1-4, 16-19. See also Zephaniah 2:13-15.)
4. Twice God declares the solemn words: 'I am against you' (Nahum 2:13; 3:5, NIV). What, in each case, is the consequence of having God as your enemy?

In the struggle for peace, it is easy for justice and righteousness to be overlooked. Pray for troubled areas of the world.

Day 4. The doom of Edom

Obadiah

Obadiah has a vision of God's judgment on the Edomites, who lived in a mountainous region to the south-east of the Dead Sea. Their geographical supremacy had given them strength in their conflicts. The final outrage, which resulted in this prophecy, was the treacherous invasion of Judah by the Edomites while Jerusalem was being sacked by the Babylonians (verses 13-14).

1. Why do you think God had to punish Edom?
2. Obadiah uses various pictures to describe Edom's fate. Imagine what it would have felt like to have your future described in these ways (verses 4-5, 16, 18). What do you think is the impact of these descriptions?

Note: Verse 18. 'House of Jacob ... and Joseph' = whole of Israel.

3. 'The day of the Lord is near', says Obadiah. What will this mean for Edom on the one hand (verse 15) and Israel on the other (verses 17-21)?

We may identify more easily with the Lord's promises to Israel, rather than his judgment on Edom - maybe there is a warning here in case we should be falling under the same condemnation. With verse 3, and verses 10-14 in mind, pray that God will show us such attitudes in our national and individual lives.

Day 5. The day of the Lord

Zephaniah

Zephaniah was probably of royal blood, tracing his ancestry back to Hezekiah 70 years or so before.

1. In popular thinking the 'day of the Lord' (chapter 1:7,14-15) would bring great blessing to God's people and destruction to their enemies. What did Zephaniah warn the 'day of the Lord' would mean to (a) Judah, (b) the heathen nations and (c) to the 'humble of the Land'? (cf. also Obadiah verse 15.)
2. Trace God's complaint against (a) his people (chapter 1:4-6, 8, 9, 12) and against (b) the leaders of Jerusalem (chapter 3:3-4).
3. The final verses of chapter 3 are a hymn of praise for God's deliverance. It applied to the people of Israel then, but can you work out any promises that reached further fulfilment in Jesus?

Meditate on chapter 3:17, learn it by heart, and take the promises into your activities today.