

OT SURVEY: PROPHETS

WEEK 4: NAHUM, EZEKIEL, OBADIAH, LAMENTATIONS

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

- We are going to take these 6 weeks and work through the Old Testament prophets!
- This will be an overview of the books in their particular group.
- During each teaching, after an overview has been done, we are going to dive into some of the areas of special interest to us and learn more about what was going on in that particular book.
- **There are two goals:** to have a general working knowledge of each of the prophetic books in the Old Testament and to have the confidence to be able to study them on our own.
- As we study these books, we want to pay special attention to what God is doing through these prophets, how the prophets themselves respond, what the message of the prophets is, and how those being prophesied to respond to their words.

- Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah
 - 11/10: The Prophets of the Neo-Assyrian Period (Jonah, Amos and Hosea)
 - 11/17: The Prophets of the Neo-Assyrian Period (Micah and Isaiah)
- Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Nahum, Ezekiel, Obadiah, Lamentations
 - 11/24: The Prophets of the Neo-Babylonian Period
 - **12/01: The Prophets of the Neo-Babylonian Period**
- Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, Malachi
 - 12/08: The Prophets of the Persian Period
 - 12/15: The Prophets of the Persian Period

INTRODUCTION TO THIS PERIOD OF HISTORY

- Just as in the Neo-Assyrian Period, the prophets in the Neo-Babylonian Period were given to offer warning, rebuke, and hope.
- God's people were sinful and rebelled against God, spurning God's perfect justice, and yet God also judged the wicked nations according to their wicked deeds against His covenant people.

Lamentations 3:24 ~ "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him."

OVERVIEW OF NAHUM

- Nahum is one of three prophets who have prophesies against ONLY other nations:
 - Nahum--against Assyria
 - Obadiah--against Edom
 - Habakkuk--against Babylon
- These three countries/empires afflicted God's people throughout their history
- Accordingly, Nahum writes his short prophecy
 - (1) to announce the doom of Nineveh and the demise of the mighty Assyrian empire and
 - (2) to bring a message of consolation to a sin-weary and oppressed Judah.

The Message:

1:1-8 God's Character as Avenger and Savior

1:9-22 God's Character Manifested in Vengeance on Nineveh and Mercy on Judah

2:3-3:19 God's Character Manifested in the Fall of Nineveh

- While Jonah had proclaimed judgement and repentance on Nineveh just 150 years prior (793 - 758 B.C.), this city-state repented.

Jonah 3:10 ~ "When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened."

- Nahum, just 150 years later (about 663 - 612 B.C.) prophesies about their sure destruction.
- They went from repenting to rebelling again.
- Nineveh returned to idolatry, violence, and arrogance
- They escaped the judgement of destruction by water and then were destroyed by water (1:8; 2:6; 3:13)
- Nahum is a message of God's divine vindication against an evil nation which unceasingly rebelled against the Lord. The Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries.

Assyria's Guilt

- Assyria was absolutely guilty and deserving of their elimination.

1:2, 8 They were God's adversaries

2:11-12 Hunted the helpless like lions

1:9,11 They plot evil against the Lord

3:1 Great bloodshed to build their power

1:11 They influenced other nations in wickedness

3:1 Full of deceit and lies to conquer their prey

1:14 Full of pride and self-made reputation

3:2 Massacres

1:14 Idolatry

3:3 Death to the masses

1:14 Vile

3:4 Sexual immorality and betrayal of other nations

1:15 Worthless

3:6 Shameful, vile, contemptable acts.

2:9 Plundered other nations

3:19 Unceasing evil.

God's Character

- God's Wrath 1:2, 6 Holy Indignation toward His enemies
- God's Jealousy 1:2 Fierce and burning anger consistent with his holiness
- God's Vengeance 1:2 Vengeance is the Lord's- He will not stand by indefinitely
- God's Patience 1:3 "slow to anger" – he is patient, but his patience has a limit
- God's Power 1:3b-5 Mountains quake and hills dissolve
- God's Goodness 1:7a "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble!"
- God's Salvation 1:7b "He knows those who take refuge in Him."
- God's Justice 1:3 He will not leave the guilty unpunished
- God's Faithfulness 1:7, 12, 15; 2:2 "For the Lord will restore the splendor of Jacob"
- God's Judgement 2:1-13
 - The siege 2:3-10 Once central for gathering, people will be scattered
 - The taunt 2:11-13 The lion becomes the prey
 - The address 2:13; 3:5 "I am against you, declares the Lord of hosts"

The proud are humbled:

Here is how this evil lion would be made the prey at their coming destruction in Chapter 3:

- V12. They had **fortresses** of strength which were like ripe fruit.
- V13. They had a massive **army** which would be made weak.
- V13. They had **defenses** to their city which would be opened wide for all to enter.
- V14. They had a strong **industry**, able to build more defenses quickly, which had no time to build.
- V15. Their **fruitfulness** in multiplying their people would be plagued like the locusts.
- V16. Their proud **economy** would be brought to nothing.
- V17. Their **leaders** would be defeated.
- V18. Their strong **government** would be dissolved.
- V19. And their **power** would turn to grievous pain.

With sudden defeat, their mighty reputation would be turned to the roar of applause by their enemies.

Nahum 1:7 ~ The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who take refuge in Him.

Nahum 1:9 ~ Whatever you devise against the Lord, He will make a complete end of it. Distress will not rise up twice.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

- Purpose:¹ Ezekiel ministered to his generation who were both exceedingly sinful and thoroughly hopeless. By means of his prophetic ministry he attempted to bring them to immediate repentance and to confidence in the distant future. He taught that:
 - (1) God works through human messengers;
 - (2) Even in defeat and despair God's people need to affirm God's sovereignty;
 - (3) God's Word never fails;
 - (4) God is present and can be worshiped anywhere;
 - (5) People must obey God if they expect to receive blessings; and
 - (6) God's Kingdom will come.

The Message: The Glory of the Lord

Chapters 1-3	Oracles about Ezekiel's Ministry, Divine Calling, God's Glory (1:28; 3:12, 23)
Chapters 4-7	God's Removal of His People from Jerusalem and its Predicted Fall
Chapters 8-11	Abomination and God's Glory Removed from the Temple (10:18-19)
Chapters 12-24	The Reality of Judgment for Jerusalem through Allegory and History
Chapters 25-32	Judgement against the Nations (Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre and Sidon, Egypt)
Chapters 33-48	Israel's Call to Repentance, Promised Restoration, and the New Temple (43:2, 4, 5; 44:5)

Beholding God

- Falling on his face in reverence and fear before the Lord: 1:28; 3:23; 9:8; 11:13; 43:3; 44:4
- Worship: When prophets saw the glory of the Lord or a manifestation of the Divine, they fell in terror!
- These prophets prostrated themselves before the Lord in complete humility, realizing their fate before God.

Ezekiel 1:28 ~ ...Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And **when I saw it, I fell on my face** and heard a voice speaking.

Ezekiel 3:23 ~ ... behold, the glory of the Lord was standing there, like the glory which I saw by the river Chebar, and **I fell on my face**.

Ezekiel 44:4 ~ I looked, and behold, **the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord, and I fell on my face**.

Daniel 8:17 ~ So he [Angel Gabriel] came near to where I was standing, and when he came **I was frightened and fell on my face**;

Isaiah 6:5 ~ Then I said, "**Woe is me, for I am ruined!** Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

- The prophets had a keen awareness of their own standing before God despite their divine call to pronounce to others their sin.

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-Ezekiel.html>

Revelation 1:17-18 ~ **When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man.** And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

John 1:18 ~ “No one has seen God at any time...”

Exodus 33:20 ~ “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”

Exodus 33:23 ~ “Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.”

- No one can see God, but he does reveal his majesty, his glory, his justice, and his wrath through theophany’s, his angelic beings, and his swift retribution, causing the humble to bow.
- Notice the pattern of a prophet who beholds God’s glory, and cares about the souls of God’s people! (Ex 34:8; Is 6, Ezek 1)

Exodus 34:8 ~ **Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship.** ⁹ He said, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, **I pray**, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and **pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession.**”

Man’s Problem and God’s Solution²

- Ezekeil shows how Isreal continually sinned against God and God cannot tolerate sin, yet he provides salvation according to his everlasting covenant.

God will turn His face from Israel (7:22)	God will not hide His face from them anymore (39:29)
Israel drives God from the Temple (8:6)	God will rebuild the Temple and dwell there (37:26-28; 40-48)
The glory of the Lord leaves the Temple (11:23)	The glory of the Lord returns to the Temple (43:1-5)
The land is taken 14:12-20)	The land is reclaimed (47:13-48:35)
Israel breaks the Mosaic covenant (16:59)	The Lord establishes an everlasting covenant (37:26)
The shepherds neglect His flock (34:10)	He will become the good Shepherd (34:11)
Israel’s devotion to idolatry (6:1-10)	God will vindicate His faithfulness and holiness (36:23)

Ezekiel 6:3 ~ “Behold, **I Myself** am going to bring a sword on you, and **I** will destroy your high places.

Ezekiel 16:60 ~ Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.

Ezekiel 20:5 ~ I will prove **Myself** holy among you in the sight of the nations.

Ezekiel 34:11 ~ “Behold, **I Myself** will search for My sheep and seek them out.

Ezekiel 34:20b-22 ~ Behold, I, even **I, will judge** between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹ Because you push with side and with shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns until you have scattered them abroad, therefore, **I will deliver My flock**, and they will no longer be a prey; and **I will judge** between one sheep and another.

- The Lord is the initiator of the rescue they needed, just as He always has.

² Adapted from C. Hassel Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 250.

Ezekiel 20:9 ~ But **I acted for the sake of My name**, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they *lived*, in whose sight **I made Myself known to them by bringing them out of the land of Egypt**.

Communicating God's Word with God's Authority in God's Way³

- Ezekiel was commissioned by God to communicate to the message people needed to hear.
- God's prophets were sent by the Lord with authority from the sender. It was like a signature on a letter. If anyone were to question the messenger's authority, the answer is clearly the authority of the one who sends him. "Thus, a messenger is to be treated as if he were this master.
- "The authority of the prophetic preaching did not reside in the speaker, but in the words of which he was the spokesman. ... Thus the prophetic word was in a sense self-authenticating."⁴
- The audience was rebellious sinners.

Ezekiel 2:3 ~ "Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.

- They even knew God's law and rebelled anyway (3:4-7). The message and the method were the same: "Go... speak... tell them... whether they listen or not, 'Thus says the Lord God.'" (3:11).
- Ezekiel's obedience to communicate the message of God was not dependent on the reaction of the people nor their current mindset. They were firm of heart, yet only God's Word was to be given. "Thus says the Lord".
- "The results are left in the hands of the Sovereign who sent him."
- Our tongues should stick to the roof of our mouths unless what we speak is the Word God has given to us.
- That our message comes from God testifies that we are truly of God and not speaking opinion.

Ezekiel 2:5 ~ As for them, whether they listen or not—for they are a rebellious house—**they will know that a prophet has been among them**.

Ezekiel 3:26-27 ~ Moreover, **I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth** so that you will be mute and cannot be a man who rebukes them, for they are a rebellious house. ²⁷ But **when I speak to you, I will open your mouth** and you will say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.' **He who hears, let him hear**; and he who refuses, let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house.

³ Adapted from George Zemek, *Tethered to the Text*, 207-210.

⁴ Zemek quotes Victor Paul Furnish, "Prophets, Apostles, and Preachers: A Study of the Biblical Concept of Preaching." *Interpretation* 17 (January 1963), 50-51 in *Tethered to the Text*, 209.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

- Obadiah was used as God’ Prophet to pronounce judgement on the Edomites for their sins against God and against Israel.
- Edom was a mountainous country before Esau (Obadiah 3-4), but Esau’s lineage so intertwined with Seir the Horite who lived there (Genesis 36) that they became known as one people, the Edomites.

Genesis 36:1 ~ Now this is the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom.

Deuteronomy 23:7 ~ “You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother...”

- While there is much background to this tale of two brothers (Gen 25:19-34; 27:1-28:9; 32-33; Num 20:14-21; 1 Sam. 14:47; 2 Sam 8:13-14; 1 Kings 11:14-25; 2 Kings 8-14), Obadiah wrote this short book because of Edom’s scavenger approach to the devastation of Jerusalem.⁵
- In 586 B.C. Jerusalem is sacked, and Edom took advantage of their downfall (vs 11).
- Unlike Assyria, Edom is offered no hope for restoration, no comfort, no promise if they might repent.

Obadiah 18 ~ there will be no survivor of the house of Esau, for the Lord has spoken.

The Message:

1-4	Indictment for Pride
5-9	Edom’s Day of the Lord
10-14	Judah’s Day of the Lord was Edom’s Delight
15-18	Edom’s Judgment and Destruction
19-21	Promise for Judah’s Return to the Land

The Pride of Comfort and Safety

- Set up in the mountains, Edom was proud of their elevated position. Geographically and politically safe.
- Gloaters and haughty by nature, Edom was secure, yet took advantage of Judah in their distress.

Obadiah 4 ~ Though you set your nest among the stars... I will bring you down, declares the Lord

- Made small though considered themselves great verse 2
- “The arrogance of your heart has deceived you” verse 3
- Dwelt in safety verse 3
- Unconquerable: “Who will bring me down?” verse 4
- Said to be wise verse 8
- Said to have mighty men verse 9
- Watched Babylon carry off their brother Judah verse 11
- Stole and looted verse 11
- Gloated and rejoiced in Judah’s misfortune verses 12-14
- “Drank” of Jerusalem’s ill-gotten gains verse 16.

⁵ Bullock, 256.f

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

- Jeremiah wrote this book sometime after Jerusalem's fall to the Babylonians in 586 B.C.
- The book is made up of five poems, using forms of acrostic for the first four.
- 22 is your KEY for the whole book! Each poem is written in 22 lines, except poem 3 which has 66 lines.
- Each poem begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each new stanza (each new line in chapter 3) introduces the next letter of the alphabet until all twenty-two letters have been used.⁶

The Message:

Chapter 1	The Pitiabale State of Jerusalem. Lament for and by Jerusalem
Chapter 2	God's Anger and Jeremiah's Anguish
3:1-36	Judah's Lament Over the Suffering at the Hands of the Nations
3:37-42	God's Judgment and a Call to Repentance
3:43-66	Complaint for Devastation and God's Response to Wickedness
Chapter 4	Jerusalem's Ruin and the Suffering for Sin
Chapter 5	Final Lament Over the Ruin of Jerusalem and the prayer for restoration

Key Verses

Lamentations 2:17 ~ The Lord has done what He purposed; He has accomplished His word which He commanded from days of old. He has thrown down without sparing, and He has caused the enemy to rejoice over you; He has exalted the might of your adversaries.

Lamentations 3:22-23 ~ *They* are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him."

Lamentations 3:39-41 ~ Why should *any* living mortal, or *any* man, Offer complaint in view of his sins? Let us examine and probe our ways, and let us return to the Lord. We lift up our heart and hands toward God in heaven

Lamentations 5:19-22 ~ You, O Lord, rule forever; your throne is from generation to generation. Why do You forget us forever? Why do You forsake us so long? Restore us to You, O Lord, that we may be restored; renew our days as of old,

God's Holy Anger

- God's anger is mentioned 10 times, referring to what God has already done in destroying Jerusalem and sending Judah into exile, and what he will surely do to the wicked nations around them.

Lamentations 1:12 ~ Is it nothing to all you who pass this way? Look and see if there is any pain like my pain which was severely dealt out to me, which **the Lord inflicted on the day of His fierce anger.**

Lamentations 2:1-3 ~ How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a **cloud in His anger!** He has cast from heaven to earth the glory of Israel, and has not remembered His footstool **in the day of His anger.**

⁶ Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 264. Proverbs 31 is another chapter that has this acrostic form, as well as Psalm 119, among others. Psalm 9 and 10 together, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 145; Proverbs 31-10-31; Lamentations 1, 2, 3, 4; Nahum 1 (allegedly).

²The Lord has swallowed up; He has not spared all the habitations of Jacob. **In His wrath He has thrown down the strongholds** of the daughter of Judah; He has brought *them* down to the ground; He has profaned the kingdom and its princes.

³**In fierce anger He has cut off all the strength of Israel; He has drawn back His right hand from before the enemy.**

Lamentations 3:43 ~ You have covered *Yourself* with **anger** And **pursued us**; You have **slain and have not spared**

- “Jeremiah is confident that the Day had come for Judah and that it was awaiting his enemies, so he prays for its arrival.” ⁷
- The swift judgment of God upon Judah was justified after all decades of warning. God’s anger should also be poured out on the nations for their rebellion.

Lamentations 1:21 ~ They have heard that I groan; there is no one to comfort me; all my enemies have heard my calamity; they are glad that You have done it. **Oh, that You would bring the day which You have proclaimed, that they may become like me.**

Lamentations 3:66 ~ You will pursue them in **anger** and destroy them from under the heavens of the Lord!

God is consistent in his character to be angry in his righteousness and opposes wickedness, yet his anger has been satisfied by the believer through Jesus, on our behalf. His wrath was poured out on Jesus and in his mercy, lavished his love on us so that we are no longer in bad standing, but are declared right in his sight (Ps 7:11; Is 42:8; Romans 8:1-8).

Man’s Honest Confession

- This book emphasizes the raw emotions of seeing the consequences of sin.
- “This book, so full of regret and penance, opens up Judah’s soul to God and man. The honest confession of sin, the conviction that Yahweh was Judge and Redeemer, and the hope of renewed mercy every morning were foundation stones on which the new Israel could and did arise. The soul of this people had sunk low and all but breathed its last. But on the ruins of the past the Lord began to build the future. **Israel’s soul revived because he despaired of his sins and he hoped in the Lord. The Book of Lamentation exposes that soul, shamed by sin and ennobled by grace, to all mankind.**”⁸

Lamentations 1:16 ~ “For these things I weep; My eyes run down with water; Because far from me is a comforter, One who restores my soul. My children are desolate Because the enemy has prevailed.”

Lamentations 3:17 ~ My soul has been rejected from peace; I have forgotten happiness.

Lamentations 3: 24 ~ “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “Therefore I have hope in Him.”

Lamentations 3: 51 ~ My eyes bring pain to my soul Because of all the daughters of my city.

Lamentations 3: 58 ~ O Lord, You have pleaded my soul’s cause; You have redeemed my life.

⁷ Bullock, 272.

⁸ Bullock, 272.