

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Read the Bible in a Year Challenge

Week 49

Monday	Micah 7	Psalm 123	Mark 1
Tuesday	Nahum 1	Psalm 124	Mark 2
Wednesday	Nahum 2	Psalm 125	Mark 3
Thursday	Nahum 3	Psalm 126	Mark 4
Friday	Habakkuk 1	Psalm 127	Mark 5
Saturday	Habakkuk 2	Psalm 128	Mark 6

Sunday: *Enjoy the lessons from Scripture as they are read aloud in Sunday worship. The Bible study summary for each Sunday of the year is found as a separate document on the parish website, under “Adult Education, Bible Study”.*

The readings from Micah:

1. See the study summary for week 48 for an introduction to Micah.
2. Micah closes with a lamentation, followed by prayer and a hymn to God.
 - a. The prophet looks for righteousness and does not find it. He mourns over the state of the people, like one who comes after everything has been harvested (7.1-6).
 - i. The motifs of blood and violence are present. Cf. Jer. 5.1; Isa. 5.7.
 - ii. The rulers are worthless.
 1. The prophet confides in and trusts in God (7.7).
 - b. The balance of the chapter is a liturgy of faith. This may be a postexilic addition. The content can be compared with Isa. 33.
 - i. Jerusalem confesses her sin, and addresses her enemy (7.8-10).
 - ii. God answers (7.11-13) and the element of “day” is in answer to the absence of “light” found in the prior section (7.11-13).
 - iii. Prayer is offered, using the figure of a shepherd, not only for God’s people but for all peoples (7.14-17).
 - iv. God is praised (7.18-20) as the One who pardons and is compassionate.

The readings from Nahum:

1. Very little is known of Nahum, the man. He is described as a native of Elkosh, but the location of this city is not agreed. It most likely was in the vicinity of Jerusalem, given the nature of Nahum as a cultic prophet.
 - a. The dating of Nahum’s writing is probably about 612—609 B.C., during Josiah’s reform.
 - i. The prophet does not castigate Judah.
 - ii. Optimism at the fall of Assyria (612) abounds over any fear of the rise of Babylon.
2. The message of the entire book is straightforward: God will execute vengeance against Nineveh (Assyria).
 - a. The prophet writes as one witnessing the destruction from inside the city.

- b. The destruction of Nineveh will bring joy to God’s people, who have suffered under the Assyrians.
 - i. The fall of Nineveh is an act of divine justice, even though the LORD had used the Assyrians as instruments of His wrath against His people.
 - ii. Just as Assyria has plundered others, now shall she be plundered.
 - c. God has not and will not abandon Judah.
3. The simple message of Nahum is delivered in a complicated poetic style, with much word play and alliteration in Hebrew. Examples include:
- a. At 2.8 the wording imitates the moaning and breast-beating of the servants: *kēqôl yônîm mētopēpôt 'al libbēhen*.
 - b. The ironic question at 3.7 plays on the verb roots *ndd*, “flee,” *nwd*, “pity,” and *šdd*, “destroy”.
 - i. This sound is echoed at 3.10 with *ydd*, “throw”.
 - c. At 1.10 there is a sort of tongue twister in which the hissing of the fire (which may be the hissing of drunkards) is imitated with a series of “s” sounds.

The readings from Habakkuk:

1. The text gives only the prophet’s name and the identification of him as a prophet. Dating (from the reference to Chaldeans) is from the time of the decline of Assyrian empire and the rise of Babylon (*e.g.*, about the turn of the seventh to the sixth century, B.C.)
 - a. The use of liturgical elements in the text (*e.g.*, the woes at 2.6-20) have led some to believe that the book was intended for use publicly in the Temple, and that Habakkuk was, therefore, a cult prophet in Jerusalem.
 - i. Elements of the Wisdom tradition are also present.
 - b. The original and important contribution of Habakkuk is to the understanding of Israel’s relationship with her LORD.
 - i. The prophet opens by questioning God directly, raising questions about divine justice, and the fact that the wicked are seen to flourish.
 1. The questions reflect an attempt to deal with the breakdown of order, which God appears to tolerate.
 - a. Despite these doubts, the prophet affirms and praises God’s absolute sovereignty and control. Thus, the disturbing elements described in chs. 1-2 are placed in a broader context of God’s plan.
 - i. Believers are to have confidence in God’s faithfulness (2.4), and to be humble in their faith and in their relations with others.
 1. Paul, therefore, refers to Habakkuk at Rom. 1.17 and Gal. 3.11. (*See also* Heb. 10.38.)
2. Chs. 1-2 comprise a dialogue between the prophet and God.
 - a. The prophet complains that there is no justice (1.2-4), and God responds (1.5-11).
 - i. It is not clear if the “wicked” are the Assyrians or a group within the Jewish nation.
 1. The exchange reflects the pattern of a psalm of lament.
 - ii. The LORD’s response gives a further reason for dismay. The Chaldeans are being raised up by God as His instrument.
 - b. The complaint continues in a second exchange (1.12-2.5). The second complaint is a reaction to God’s first response.

- i. The solemnity of the text of God's response includes the call to faithfulness found at 2.4.
 1. This solemnity and affirmation thus leads into the five woes found at 2.6-20.
 - a. The woes are ironic, expressing joy over the fate of the enemy. The woes are directed against the greed and oppression of Babylon.
 - i. What is made clear is that God judges not just one empire, but all forms of oppression.

The psalms: N.B. *In The Bible Challenge the Psalter is read twice (once in each half year). We may all be led into new insights, particularly in focusing on praying each psalm (preferably aloud). See the summary for week 1 for a general introduction.*

1. See the study summaries for weeks 22 and 23.

The Gospel according to St. Mark:

1. See the study summaries for weeks 5 and 6 for a discussion of the readings from Mark.