

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 55.0%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: Nahum 1

Monday: Nahum 2 & 3

Tuesday: Habakkuk 1 & 2

Wednesday: Habakkuk 3

Thursday: Zephaniah 1

Friday: Zephaniah 2

Saturday: Zephaniah 3

Current # of email addresses in the group: 625

Happy Sabbath everyone! This is an exciting week to me. We get to start and finish, three very interesting books (Nahum, Habakkuk & Zephaniah)! Tuesday will be a longer reading day, but Wednesday is rather short, so it all balances out.

I enjoyed studying these books and I hope you enjoy reading them along with the UCG commentary.

The audio archive information is available on our UCG Bay Area YouTube page here:

https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA_tacLBfv1XR3jH

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3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 84

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 568 – SUNDAY: January 12th

Nahum 1

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Little is known of the prophet Nahum, whose message concerns the coming destruction of Nineveh, capital of the Assyrian Empire. The time of his prophecy is ascertained from two key facts. The fall of the Egyptian city of Thebes (No Amon), which occurred in 663 B.C., is mentioned as a past event ([Nahum 3:8](#)). And the fall of Nineveh, which occurred in 612 B.C., was yet future. So Nahum must have written between these dates.

The prophet is called an Elkoshite ([Nahum 1:1](#)), apparently after a native city named Elkosh, the location of which is uncertain. Some maintain that, "since Nahum wrote considerably after the destruction of Israel in 722 B.C., we may assume that Elkosh was in Judah" (*Nelson Study Bible*, introductory notes on Nahum). And Nahum does specifically address Judah in the prophecy (verse 15). Others, however, point out: "His name is in the word 'Capernaum' [modern Kfar Nahum], which means 'village of Nahum.' This may indicate that he was a resident, or founder, of Capernaum.... Elkosh, his birthplace, was probably nearby" (*Halley's Bible Handbook*, 1965, "Nahum"). This at first glance seems odd since Capernaum was located on the north coast of the Sea of Galilee, in the land of the former northern kingdom of Israel. But a period of residence in Capernaum could actually make sense if Nahum preached during the time of Josiah, when Israelites known as Scythians reoccupied the area of the northern kingdom for a decade or so prior to Assyria's fall. Perhaps Nahum lived for a while in the area of Capernaum, preaching to these Israelites. *The Nelson Study Bible* suggests that his book was written "under the reform of Josiah in 622 B.C." And that would fit the time frame of Scythian occupation.

He could not have been born nearby, however, as that would have been too long before the Scythian occupation. So Elkosh may have been in Judah even if Nahum later lived in Capernaum. *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, however, places Elkosh much farther away: "This place is located at the modern *Alkush*, a village on the east bank of the Tigris," the area of ancient Assyria ("Elkosh"). *Halley's Bible Handbook* comments on this, "There is said to have been an Elkosh on the Tigris, 20 miles north of Nineveh, and that Nahum may have been among the Israelite captives." Surprisingly, this is quite possible. Perhaps Nahum was actually among the Scythians who came back to the Promised Land from northern Mesopotamia. He may have given witness to Nineveh itself of its coming destruction before later proclaiming these words to Judah. However, it should be pointed out

that there is no indication that Nahum's words were ever actually communicated to the ancient Assyrians.

In any case, we can be confident that these words of Nahum were communicated to the people of Judah—for it is the Jews who preserved his prophecy. The name Nahum means "Comfort," and his words—foretelling the destruction of Israel and Judah's terrible enemy—were certainly of great comfort. Assyria, portrayed as a den of ravaging lions feeding on the blood of the nations, was brutal beyond imagination ([Nahum 2:11-13](#)). Though Nineveh had temporarily repented at Jonah's preaching around 150 years before and had been spared, the capital city of Assyria is now marked for destruction. And God will bring infinitely more power and finality than Assyria had brought upon her enemies.

We should not miss the duality of this warning. There are clear indications that it is also an end-time prophecy. First is the mention of the "day of trouble" ([Nahum 1:7](#)), which signifies the future Day of the Lord. Then there's the fact that God's people will be afflicted no more (verse 12), the wicked enemy never again allowed to pass through their land (verse 15)—which has not been true of the Jewish people in the more than 2,600 years since the fall of ancient Nineveh. And finally, the description of Nineveh as the great harlot of sorceries ([Nahum 3:4](#)) ties it directly to other prophecies of end-time Babylon (see [Isaiah 47](#); [Revelation 17-18](#)). At the end, modern Assyria will once again arise as the foe of Israel (see [Isaiah 10:5-6](#)). As explained in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on [Isaiah 10](#), it is the people of Central Europe who are, in large part, descended from the ancient Assyrians. Nineveh may represent the seat of power of a future Central European nation or of the empire this people will come to dominate. For modern Assyria will be the foremost nation of the coming Beast power, end-time Babylon, which will once again enslave Israel and then fight against

Christ at His second coming (see [Revelation 13](#); 17; 18). And once again she will be brought to utter destruction!

Thus, the book of Nahum is a book of stern warning—to the peoples of Central Europe yes, but in a larger sense to the entire European empire they will be part of and, in an even larger sense still, to all who will oppose God and His people. However, it is a book of blessing and great comfort to all who will stand with God and put their trust in Him ([Nahum 1:7](#))—including any of Assyrian descent who will forsake the ways of sin and pursue God's Kingdom and righteousness. Ultimately, under the rule of Christ, the Assyrian nation will repent and serve God alongside the Israelites ([Isaiah 19:23-25](#)). But dark times will precede this wonderful future.

The Lord Avenges His People

The book opens with a portrait of God as an avenger of His people. The term is used in different forms three times in verse 2. He is further described as jealous and furious. The fact that He is "slow to anger" in verse 3 may be a reminder of Jonah's visit to Nineveh long before, when God stayed His hand in response to the citizens' repentance. But now they had devolved into their former conduct. In an end-time setting, we should remember that the peoples of Central Europe and other Europeans have been exposed to Scripture for centuries—with all of its godly instructions and warnings against disobedience such as Jonah gave—and yet a regime to rival the Third Reich is going to eventually arise again among them.

God's all-consuming power is witnessed by His control over all elements of the earth (verses 3-6)—a common formula in the Minor Prophets. Yet His fierce anger against His enemies is contrasted with His goodness toward those who trust in Him (verse 7). If we remain faithful, we will be preserved through the day of trouble—be it any time of great

difficulty or the worst time of trouble ever seen, which is yet to come upon the earth.

In verse 8, the end of Nineveh comes with an overflowing flood. "It is believed that the invaders of Nineveh entered the city through its flooded waterways" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 8). This may well be as the city was guarded by walls 100 feet high. And it seems to be supported by [Nahum 2:6](#). "Archaeologists have found evidence of flood debris that may be associated with the destruction of the city" (note on 2:6). Still, it should be noted that an overwhelming flood can simply signify an invading enemy army in Scripture (see [Isaiah 59:19](#); [Jeremiah 46:7-8](#); [Jeremiah 47:2](#); [Psalm 18:16-17](#); [Psalm 69:1-2](#)).

In [Nahum 1:9-11](#), the prophet directly addresses Nineveh, seen as conspiring and plotting against God. This could apply in some sense to Assyria's planned invasion of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah—but that was perhaps 80 years before Nahum wrote. Since this doesn't appear to refer to anything that transpired in Nahum's own day, it seems to make more sense to view this in an end-time context—when the peoples of Central Europe, as part of the final Beast power, will destroy the modern Israelite nations and then oppose Christ at His return (see our free booklet [The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy](#)). The "wicked counselor" of verse 11 could be the end-time Beast dictator or his accomplice, the false prophet—or perhaps even Satan the Devil, the dragon who empowers their evil system (see [Revelation 16:13-14](#) and our free booklet [The Book of Revelation Unveiled](#)).

Verses 12-13 of [Nahum 1](#) contain a message to God's people. Though Assyria feels safe, she will be utterly cut off. No more will God afflict His people with this destructive empire. The bursting of bonds shows that His people will be enslaved by this empire in the last days (compare [Jeremiah 30:8](#)). Thankfully, God will free them—and free them for good.

In [Nahum 1:14](#), the prophet proclaims to Nineveh the direct warning of God. Its idolatrous religion will be brought to an end. In ancient times, this was centered on the worship of the forefather of the Assyrians, Asshur (see [Genesis 10:22](#); "Assyria, Asshur," *Smith's Bible Dictionary*). Yet he was, it appears, in many respects confused with the ancient founder of Nineveh and Babylon, Nimrod (see [Genesis 10:8-12](#)). And the worship of Nimrod has actually persisted to the present day in what the book of Revelation calls "Mystery Babylon," a great false religion masquerading as Christianity that dominates the world. It will come to an end with the return of Christ.

God also states that Nineveh will be buried. Concerning ancient Nineveh, "this prophecy came true literally—the city was destroyed so completely that its very existence was questioned until its discovery by archeologists in the nineteenth century ([Nahum] 3:13-15)" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 1:14). "For all its might, Nineveh fell quickly into ruin, leaving no trace but a mound which is known today as Tell Kuyunjik, 'the mound of many sheep'" (*Eerdmans Handbook to the Bible*, note on [Nahum 3](#)). Yet that was but a forerunner of the destruction that will ultimately come on the end-time Assyro-Babylonian superpower centered in Europe.

In verse 15 of chapter 1, Nahum repeats a prophecy of Isaiah (see [Isaiah 52:7](#)). It applies to God's servants proclaiming His gospel (meaning "good news"). First and foremost it is a prophecy of the coming of Jesus Christ, who "came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God" ([Mark 1:14](#)). This may even refer here to Christ's *second* coming—when He announces to the world His intention to bring peace (see [Zechariah 9:10](#)) and then brings world peace at last (following a period of terrible rebellion against Him at the end). "Behold...!" the message says here in Nahum and in Isaiah. And indeed, "every eye will see Him" ([Revelation 1:7](#)).

Also in [Nahum 1:15](#), the Jews are told to keep their appointed feasts. Indeed, the feasts the Jews observe are *God's* feasts (see [Leviticus 23](#))—and God is telling them to keep these feasts in an end-time context, as frankly all of mankind should. Yet, before the end, the Jews will apparently be *forbidden* to observe God's festivals by the invading European power—a repeat of what occurred when Syrian ruler Antiochus Epiphanes took over the land in the second century B.C. (see [“Just What Is the Abomination of Desolation?”](#) *The Good News*, Jan.-Feb. 2002, pp. 8-9, 24). But God will remove the end-time invader, enabling the Jews to freely observe His festivals again. Indeed, that is the point of this wonderful verse of Nahum.” [END]

Day 569 – MONDAY: January 13th

Nahum 2 & 3

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Man the fort!” God sarcastically says to Nineveh in verse 1 of chapter 2—as if they could defend themselves against His judgment. It is not clear who is meant in verse 1 by “he who scatters” or “he that dasheth in pieces” (KJV). It could be a reference to God Himself. The returning Jesus Christ at the end time will dash His enemies in pieces ([Revelation 2:26-28](#)). Or it could refer to other forces God brings against Assyria. Indeed, the latter seems to be supported somewhat by [Nahum 2:2](#), as we will see.

The King James Version translators rendered verse 2 to say that God “hath turned away” the excellence of Jacob—perhaps seeing this from the emptied and ruined state of Israel at the end of the verse. Yet many other versions, including the New King James and Jewish Tanakh, translate this to say God “will restore” the excellence of Jacob. In this picture, the emptiers (the Assyrians) have emptied and ruined the Israelites. But God will restore them—and He restores “Jacob” (the rejected, physical Israelites) to be like “Israel” (His chosen covenant people).

Thus, verses 1 and 2 appear to be telling Nineveh to defend itself against a restored Israel. It is fascinating to consider that ancient Nineveh was overthrown by a coalition of Chaldean Babylonians, Medes *and Scythians*—the latter being Israelites taken into captivity more than a century earlier by the Assyrians (see our free booklet [*The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*](#)). This may have been a partial fulfillment of the prophecy. But the ancient Scythians did not represent a truly restored Israel. This would seem to apply more to the latter days. In the future, the European Beast power is going to devastate the countries of modern Israel and empty them of most of their people. But around the time of Christ's return, God will empower a resurgence of His people—and they will be used to help bring down the end-time Beast power, to "break [Babylon] in pieces" (see [Jeremiah 51:19-24](#); compare [Isaiah 41:11-16](#); [Micah 4:13](#); [Zechariah 12:6](#); [Zechariah 14:14](#)). Furthermore, consider that *spiritual* Israel—the Church of God—will be glorified with divine power at this time and will accompany Jesus Christ as He confronts His enemies. Indeed, the dashing to pieces of enemies will be put in their power (see again [Revelation 2:26-28](#)).

Verses 3-4 of [Nahum 2](#) are images of warfare—perhaps even modern warfare, as chariots with flaming torches that run like lightning could signify tanks and the like. In verse 3, the phrase "the spears are brandished" is literally "the fir trees shall be terribly shaken" (KJV).

Verse 6 says the gates of the rivers are opened, as mentioned in the previous reading. This would seem to tie back to 1:8, whether it is a literal flood or a flood of armies. In either case, the result is the same: "The palace is dissolved." Historian Will Durant writes: "Sennacherib [who came against Judah in the days of Hezekiah] raised at Nineveh a royal mansion called 'The Incomparable,' surpassing in size all other palaces of antiquity" (*The Story of Civilization*, Vol. 1: *Our Oriental Heritage*, 1963 ed., p. 282). Through the reign of Sennacherib's son

Esarhaddon, the palace had deteriorated so much that, when the next emperor, Ashurbanipal—the last great ancient Assyrian emperor—came to power, he extravagantly rebuilt it (pp. 282-283). But the great palace was destroyed when Nineveh was invaded. Likewise, in the end time, the palace of the final dictator of the Beast power will be "dissolved."

[Nahum 2:7](#) in the New King James Version begins with the words "It is decreed." But this is an attempt to translate a word of uncertain meaning, *Huzzab*—often perceived as a name. The immediate mention of "she...and her maidservants" would seem to support this. Huzzab comes from a root meaning "stand"—thus the idea of "establish" or "decree." But some see it as one who "*stood by* the king"—implying a queen (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on 2:7). This may well be related to the harlot of chapter 3, which is almost certainly to be equated with Babylon the Great, the harlot who sits as queen over the nations (see [Isaiah 47](#); [Revelation 17-18](#)), the great ruling false church. She, the great captor, will herself be led away captive.

In [Nahum 2:8](#), Nineveh's soldiers flee away in spite of the efforts of military leaders to rally them. Nineveh possesses enormous wealth from its plunder of other nations and the invaders are urged to take the spoil of victory (verse 9). Amazingly, the city is finally emptied (verse 10). The powerful ravenous beast is itself devoured because God has brought stronger forces against her (verses 10-13). (The symbolism of lions is appropriate for Assyria here, as its ancient emperors often compared themselves to lions in power.)

Chapter 3 recaps the whole scene in a "woe oracle," pronounced over those doomed by God. Nineveh is described as a bloody city, constantly at war, deceitful in foreign policy and plundering her neighbors (verses 1-3). We have seen the like in the Third Reich. Yet that was but a forerunner of the end-time European empire yet to appear on the

world scene. But as this prophecy shows, in the end Assyria (ancient and future) will itself be bloodied and plundered.

Verse 4 describes the "seductive harlot, the mistress of sorceries"—again, clearly a reference to end-time Babylon, dominated by the Babylonian mystery religion, as described in [Isaiah 47](#) and [Revelation 17-18](#). Nineveh would in this sense seem to represent the spiritual capital of the coming European empire—Rome—or at least the great religion centered there. In [Isaiah 47](#) God tells this "Lady of Kingdoms" (verse 5) that she will be punished, mentioning "the multitude of your sorceries" and "the great abundance of your enchantments" (verse 9). In [Nahum 3:4](#) she is said to have sold entire nations. This has happened and will happen in a spiritual sense—as this system has given peoples over to the ruler of this world and His evil doctrines for her increased power and wealth. But it has also happened literally, as the Roman bishops of the Middle Ages gave peoples over to various despots to ensure the dominions of the church. There will also be a literal fulfillment when the end-time harlot participates in the selling of conquered peoples prior to Christ's return ([Revelation 18:9-13](#)). For her abominations God will cause her to be shamed, defiled and destroyed ([Nahum 3:5-7](#); see [Revelation 17:16](#)).

In [Nahum 3:8](#), God refers to No-Amon—the city of Thebes in Egypt. Thebes had itself sat on a great river, the mighty Nile. It had been the seat of many pharaohs and a major center of religious worship and sprawling temples. Her neighbors were allied with her, yet she fell in ignominy to the Assyrians in 663 B.C., her children slaughtered and her mighty ones taken captive (verses 9-10). Here, God announces that Nineveh will fare just as badly before His coming onslaught. Nineveh will be taken as easily as ripe figs are shaken from a tree. The soldiers of Assyria will be as drunken or as women in the coming battle and her fortresses useless (verses 11-13). Her leaders will disappear when the need for them is greatest (verse 17). They will sleep in the dust and be

forgotten (verse 18). The peoples who are left will at last rejoice—relieved at the removal of the empire's continual oppression and harsh treatment of them (verse 19). All this surely came to pass in 612 B.C. as a type of what is yet to occur in the last days.

Notice historian Will Durant's account of what happened to ancient Nineveh: "Ashurbanipal died in 626 B.C. Fourteen years later an army of Babylonians under Nabopolassar united with an army of Medes under Cyaxares and a horde of Scythians from the Caucasus, and with amazing ease and swiftness captured the citadels of the north. Nineveh was laid waste as ruthlessly and completely as her kings had once ravaged Susa and Babylon; the city was put to the torch, the population was slaughtered or enslaved, and the palace so recently built by Ashurbanipal was sacked and destroyed. At one blow Assyria disappeared from history. Nothing remained of her except certain tactics and weapons of war, certain voluted capitals of semi-'Ionic' columns, and certain methods of provincial administration that passed down to Persia, Macedon and Rome. The Near East remembered her for a while as a merciless unifier of a dozen lesser states; and the Jews recalled Nineveh vengefully as 'the bloody city, full of lies and robbery.' In a little while all but the mightiest of the Great Kings were forgotten, and all their royal palaces were in ruins under the drifting sands. Two hundred years after its capture, Xenophon's Ten Thousand marched over the mounds that had been Nineveh, and never suspected that these were the site of the ancient metropolis that had ruled half the world. Not a stone remained visible of all the temples with which Assyria's pious warriors had sought to beautify their greatest capital. Even Ashur, the everlasting god, was dead" (pp. 283-284).

Let this serve as a warning to the coming Europe superpower soon to dominate the globe—as the book of Nahum is surely meant to be.”
[END]

Day 570 – TUESDAY: January 14th

Habakkuk 1 & 2

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Habakkuk, whose name appears to mean “Embraced”—that is, it is typically concluded, *by God*—may have served as part of the temple music service at the time of his writing (see [Habakkuk 3:19](#)). The inscription in the Greek Septuagint to Bel and the Dragon, an apocryphal book in which Habakkuk is mentioned, says he was a Levite, which would fit with such musical service (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, introductory notes on Habakkuk).

In his prophecy, Habakkuk decries the wickedness of the Jewish society around him, and God warns that punishment is soon going to come from the Chaldeans—the ruling class of Babylon. The prophet's "reference to the Babylonians indicates that they had already become an independent and terrifying presence, a state of affairs which surely presupposes the accession of Nabopolassar to Babylonian kingship in 626 ([Habakkuk 1:6-11](#))" (Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, p. 455). That is, Nabopolassar must already have been on the throne and advancing against Assyrian power. As we have seen, his forces, along with others, finally sacked Nineveh in 612 B.C. and thereupon began a mop-up operation to stamp out pockets of Assyrian resistance. In 609 a residual Assyrian force was defeated at Haran, but Assyria's ally Egypt gained control over Judah and Syria upon the death of Josiah. Four years afterward, in 605 B.C.—as we will see more about later—the Babylonian forces under Nabopolassar's son Nebuchadnezzar crushed the last Assyrian holdouts and their Egyptian allies at Carchemish on the Euphrates. Egypt retreated and Judah came under Babylonian dominion.

For this reason, Habakkuk's book being no later than "605 is virtually certain since the judgment upon Judah appears to be totally in the future. On the other hand, Judah is in such a perilous state—injustice

abounds and there is no redress—that one can hardly envision Josiah in power any longer. The description of moral and civil anarchy fits very well the early years of Jehoiakim (608-605) just before the evils of Judah brought divine intervention in the form of Nebuchadnezzar" (p. 455). A date of "somewhere around 607 or 606 b.c." seems most likely (p. 455, footnote).

Habakkuk is disturbed at the rampant sin around him—yet he is disturbed still further at the agents of punishment God is going to use to deal with that sin. "Some people believe that human beings should never question the ways of God. They may even feel that it borders on sin to ask God, 'Why?' But the book of Habakkuk counters that idea. It is filled with a prophet's perplexing questions—and the Lord's penetrating answers. God never seems to reproach his servant for asking two basic questions: Why does the Lord seem not to respond ([Habakkuk 1:2-4](#)) to the injustice and violence that Habakkuk sees around him?; How can God use the vicious and idolatrous Babylonians ([Habakkuk 1:12-17](#)) to judge his people?" ("Questioning God," *Word in Life Bible*, sidebar on [Habakkuk 1:2](#)).

As in [Psalm 73](#), "this problem has troubled believers in one form or another from the beginning. Why does God permit the wicked to succeed in this world? Why doesn't He act, so that the good rather than the wicked prosper? The answers we find in Habakkuk show us that the wicked do not succeed—and that no one, good or bad, can avoid the disciplining hand of God. There are moral and theological questions raised by sin's presence, in our own lives and in the ways of the wicked. Perhaps the best and most satisfying answers to be found in Scripture are revealed here in this small, but vital, Old Testament book" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, introductory notes on Habakkuk).

It should be noted that while the book of Habakkuk was a message to the people of his day, it well applies to our time too. Indeed, while the terrible societal problems the prophet mentions at the outset no doubt

applied to what he himself witnessed in seventh-century-B.C. Judah, it is interesting that the nation of Judah is not actually named. Thus, it could also apply to *all* of Israel in the *end* time—which, as is clear from other prophecies, will suffer at the hands of a modern revival of Babylon. Notice [Habakkuk 2:3](#) regarding Babylon's fall: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak...." While this could have applied to ancient Babylon, the fall of which occurred nearly 70 years later, it seems more applicable to events much farther off in time. The "day of trouble" here ([Habakkuk 3:16](#)) is the time of the fall of Babylon—and the *ultimate* day of trouble, which will accomplish the *ultimate* fall of Babylon, is the future Day of the Lord, immediately preceding the time of Jesus Christ's return. Finally, the clearest indication of all that this is a prophecy of the last days is the mention of Christ's future reign over all nations ([Habakkuk 2:14](#)).

Habakkuk's Questions

The book begins with Habakkuk's first question. He asks God about the violence, lack of justice, and lawlessness he sees ([Habakkuk 1:2-4](#)). He does not state where these problems are occurring, but "when these terms are used in the O[ld] T[estament] without reference to some specific foreign enemy, they typically characterize conditions among God's people" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on verse 3). Indeed, it is likely that this is what Habakkuk witnessed in the society of Judah in his day. However, his words "Why do *You* show me...and *cause me to see...?*" may also indicate that these were visions God gave him of the future—of our day.

Verse 4 says, "Therefore the law is powerless." This can be viewed in one of two ways. For one, all the law that God gave is powerless to itself properly direct one's conduct. It is up to each person's choice and will whether or not he or she will obey God. The apostle James later described how someone could look at God's instructions and ignore them ([James 1:22-25](#)). Yet, while a true principle, that may not be

Habakkuk's actual point here. The NIV renders his words, "Therefore the law is paralyzed." The implication seems to be that the legal *system*—the *administration* of law as given in the Law of Moses—is supposed to function so that the innocent are vindicated and the guilty are punished. But when witnesses and those who *run* the system are given over to wrong values and behavior, the law—again, the legal *system*—is prevented from functioning as it should. That was true when Habakkuk wrote—and it is sadly true today (considering that numerous elements of modern justice systems in the free world derive from Mosaic precepts).

In the face of such rampant evil and corruption, Habakkuk essentially asks God, "Why don't You *do something* about all this? When are You going to act?"

God responds in verses 5-11. He has an "astounding" plan underway to punish His people. God says this will happen "in your days" (verse 5). But it is not clear exactly whom God is speaking to here. It could be Habakkuk. But God says, "...which you would not believe, though it were told you" (same verse). While this could perhaps mean that it was too horrible for any person to really grasp even if he thought he did, it seems more likely to refer to a faithless rejection of God's message. Since Habakkuk himself does believe God, as the rest of the book shows, the message would appear to be directed at God's faithless people—God speaking *through* Habakkuk but *to* them. Thus, the "your days" would be *their* days. It likely did apply to the Jews of the prophet's time. But it could also be addressed to all Israel of *our* day.

Chaldean Invasion

In responding, God lays out the terrible punishment that is coming. The *instruments* of punishment will be the Chaldeans, a terribly fierce people (verses 6-11). During earlier days of Assyrian rule, these people had moved southeast from the area of Armenia down into Babylonia.

The emerging Neo-Babylonian Empire was thus a mixture of earlier Babylonians and the Chaldeans—the Chaldeans actually making up the ruling class. Babylon was currently ruled by the Chaldean king Nabopolassar, who led the overthrow of Assyria. His son and soon-to-be successor Nebuchadnezzar would soon visit destruction on Judah—an obvious fulfillment of this prophecy. But it was also a prototype fulfillment of a greater fulfillment to come in the end time. As explained earlier in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary, many of the descendants of the Babylonians—original and Chaldean—later ended up in Italy and other areas of southern Europe ([see highlights for Isaiah 13:1-14:2](#)). In the last days, they and the modern Assyrians of north-central Europe will together form a final revival of the Roman Empire that the Bible refers to as Babylon (see [Revelation 17-18](#)). This final Babylon—a significant portion of its population actually being Chaldean—certainly fits the description given in Habakkuk's prophecy. This coming empire will be used to invade and destroy end-time Israel and Judah and take those who are left of them into captivity.

The translation of [Habakkuk 1:11](#) is not certain. This rendering makes sense: "Then they sweep on like the wind and are gone [on to some new conquest], these men whose power is their god" (Today's English Version).

This brings Habakkuk to his second question. He is glad that God is going to take action on his initial complaint—and that God will deliver the righteous in the land. But he is confused as to why God would use the wicked Babylonians to bring judgment. He basically asks God, "How can you, the Holy God, use an evil, treacherous people for correcting your nation? The Babylonians' sins are worse!" (compare verses 12-13). Habakkuk wants to know why God would allow it to appear "that mankind is like fish in the sea, with no moral governor supervising human affairs. How can God permit the wicked to prosper and thus raise questions, not only about His moral governance of the universe,

but about His very existence?" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on verses 13-17). Habakkuk reasons with God this way: "With the Babylonians allowed to continue conquering other nations, they're not learning to worship *You*. They're worshipping their tools of conquest. So why do You let them enjoy the fruit of their conquests and keep devouring other nations?" (compare verses 15-17).

Habakkuk then recommits himself to the responsibility God has given him to serve as a watchman and relate what he sees and hears to others. He is most interested to hear what God has to say in response to what he's just said ([Habakkuk 2:1](#)). Indeed, his wording almost makes it look like he is braced for impact—knowing that he has made some pretty bold statements. But he is in no way antagonistic toward God. In fact, he deeply wants God to set Him straight (same verse).

The Just Shall Live by Faith

The rest of chapter 2 is God's answer. God tells Habakkuk to write it "in large legible characters...upon tables—boxwood tables covered with wax, on which national affairs were engraved with an iron pen, and then hung up in public, at the prophets' own houses, or at the temple, that those who passed might read them" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on verse 2). "We might paraphrase the meaning here by saying 'Write it on a billboard, so large a running man might read it.' What God is about to reveal to the prophet is important, and everyone [not just Habakkuk] needs to understand the Lord's response" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on verse 2).

In verse 3, God is basically saying, "Look, what I'm about to tell you isn't going to happen overnight. It's going to take time for the full measure of these words to be demonstrated—indeed, that won't happen in an ultimate sense until the end of the age. But just wait—you'll eventually see that it's just as I'm saying." The New Testament book of Hebrews, likely written by the apostle Paul, quotes this verse as applying to the

return of Christ, who will bring with Him the full measure of reward to the righteous and of punishment to the wicked ([Hebrews 10:37](#)).

Returning to [Habakkuk 2](#), God's explanation then begins. "The proud" of verse 4 refers to the Babylonians, those exulting in great conquests, as is clear from verses 5 and 8. "His soul is not upright in him" could simply mean "His life is not straight," that is, his path of life is crooked and twisted—cursed. On the other hand, "the just shall live by his faith." In contrast to the cursed path of the wicked, the righteous have a *blessed* life—a happy and hopeful life guided by faith. This doesn't mean nothing bad ever happens to them. But by faith they know that God's way is right and will ultimately bring great reward; and this causes them to *live* the right way and experience true blessings thereby—ultimately life eternal. Verse 4 is quoted in [Hebrews 10:38](#), just after the Hebrews quote previously mentioned, to show that faith gives us endurance to ultimately be saved (see verses 35-39). Paul also quoted [Habakkuk 2:4](#) in relating the fact that we as Christians must live through believing the gospel message Christ brought—as it is the way to eternal salvation (see [Romans 1:16-17](#)). And in another context he used the same verse to show that justification—being right with God—comes through faith ([Galatians 3:11](#)).

Continuing in [Habakkuk 2](#), God then runs through the cursed life of the proud such as Babylon. "The Lord shows Habakkuk that He does *not* tolerate the treacherous. Even as the wicked appear to triumph, God is in fact at work judging them! Their success is superficial, for the wicked are never satisfied (vv. 4-5). Their mistreatment of others creates enemies (vv. 6-8). They are driven to build 'secure' retreats which will never protect them (vv. 9-11), for they have no future (vv. 12-14). Coming disgrace is certain (vv. 15-17), for they have no place to turn for guidance or help (vv. 18-20). When we understand what is going on within the heart of the wicked, and when we understand that forces their wicked acts set in motion will surely

destroy them, we realize that God does not tolerate them. At the height of their success He is in the process of judging them. Severely" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, chapter 2 summary).

In verse 5, the transgression appears to begin with wine. "Love of wine often begets a proud contempt of divine things, as in Belshazzar's case, which was the immediate cause of the fall of Babylon (Daniel 5:2-4, [Daniel 5:30](#); cf. Proverbs 20:1; [Proverbs 30:9](#); [Proverbs 31:5](#))" (*JFB Commentary*, note on verse 5). However, the wine here is most likely figurative—expressive of intoxication over former success. It is also possible that it relates to false ideology, as [Revelation 17:2](#) mentions the "wine" of Babylon's immorality. This is what leads them into their false pursuits. In any case, whatever they have is not enough. They are never satisfied ([Habakkuk 2:5](#); drawing imagery from [Proverbs 27:20](#)). "What a terrible judgment this is. To have everything you want—except satisfaction" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on [Habakkuk 2:4-5](#)).

Woes for the Wicked

Verse 6 introduces a taunting song or poem: "The 'derisive song' here begins [with the word 'woe'], and continues to the end of the chapter. It is a symmetrical whole, and consists of five stanzas.... Each stanza has its own subject, and all except the last begin with 'woe'; and all have a closing verse introduced with 'for,' 'because,' or 'but'" (*JFB*, note on verse 6).

In the first stanza (verses 6-8), God condemns Babylon's aggression, thievery and bloodshed. He states that the conquered peoples who've been stolen from will rise up and demand what is theirs—and seek vengeance over the harm they've been done (verses 7-8). In the second stanza (verses 9-11), the taunt is over their covetousness and attempt to secure themselves through wealth. In verse 10, Babylon has conquered many peoples to build its "house" or empire but this will

come back on its head—for various parts of the "house" will call for rebellion and others will join in (verse 11).

In the third stanza (verses 12-14), the concern is over building an empire through bloodshed and lawlessness. The fact of the matter is that all their efforts are going into something that will ultimately be burned to the ground (verse 13). In verse 14 God reiterates His wonderful millennial prophecy from [Isaiah 11:9](#). "God intends to fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord, not with monuments to murderers. Whatever the wicked accomplish will crumble, and the wicked person himself will be forgotten" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on [Habakkuk 2:12-14](#)).

The fourth stanza (verses 15-17) describes the inhumanity of the evil Babylonian system, which seeks to make others drunk in order to molest them. Ancient Babylon's captives suffered a condition comparable to drunkenness—swooning, humiliation and utter incapacitation. And this prophecy certainly ties to [Revelation 17](#), where Babylon, the great false church of the end time, is described: "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (verses 1-2). This system is pictured with "a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication" (verse 4). Horrifyingly, it is drunk with the blood of God's saints (verse 6). God says he has a new cup for this system to drink ([Habakkuk 2:16](#))—one of retribution (verse 17). Babylon itself will be attacked and defiled and ultimately revealed as uncircumcised—despite its claim to being the spiritually circumcised church of God. The "Lebanon" of verse 17 most likely refers to Jerusalem (see again the highlights on [Jeremiah 22:10-17](#)). What Babylon has done to God's people will be done to Babylon in return.

The fifth stanza (verses 18-20) condemns the idolatry of Babylon. Even today, the system of worship descended from ancient Babylon still venerates idolatrous images. In contrast to lifeless idols, God is very much alive in His holy temple in heaven—from where He sees everything and hears the constant din of billions of false prayers to false concepts of divinity. God orders everyone to just "shut up" (see verse 20)—for judgment is about to fall (compare [Zephaniah 1:7](#); [Zechariah 2:13](#)).” [END]

Day 571 – WEDNESDAY: January 15th

Habakkuk 3

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Habakkuk 3 is a prayer of Habakkuk arranged as a psalm. Observe, for instance, the musical term *Selah* in verses 3, 9 and 13 (which may denote a musical rest or interlude) and the liturgical note at the end of verse 19, "To the Chief Musician," which occurs in the heading of 55 psalms, and "With my stringed instruments," which essentially appears in the heading of several psalms. In verse 1, *Shigionoth* is apparently the plural of *Shiggaion*, which occurs in the heading of [Psalm 7](#). "The word *shiggayon* comes from *shagah*, 'to wander,' a wandering song" (*Adam Clarke's Commentary*, note on [Psalm 7](#); see note on [Habakkuk 3:1](#)). It is "apparently an indication of the musical setting to be employed for this poem. It may derive from a verbal root meaning 'to reel' or 'to err,' and if so points to some irregular rhythmic mode. At all events, as when such words occur in Psalm titles, it points to the use of this hymn in Temple worship" (*New Bible Commentary*, note on verse 1).

Having heard the details of God's coming judgment, Habakkuk is sobered and states his concern (verse 2)—apparently for his own people but perhaps also for the rest of mankind, even including the Babylonians. While he asks that God revive His mighty works of old "in these years" (same verse, Tanakh)—that He would act soon to set

things right—He pleads with God to exercise mercy in the dealing out of His judgment.

Habakkuk then reviews some of God's awesome works of the past: His appearance in great power and might at Mount Sinai and His judgments through the wilderness wanderings (verses 3-7), His division of the Red Sea to save His people and destroy the Egyptians and perhaps His division of the Jordan River so the Israelites could invade Canaan (verses 8-10), His judgment on other nations when He intervened for Israel in battle (verses 11-15). "These poetic descriptions are intended to pull away the veil of space and time and look beyond the material universe to sense God's elemental power unleashed in judgment.... The specific incidents in which God's anger flared are only hinted at.... What we are to realize is that the historical events, as terrible as they are...pale when compared to the burning anger of God which the material universe currently conceals. How awful it will be for those who one day experience that anger face-to-face" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on verses 3-15).

The prophet trembles at the prospect of people having to face the unleashed power of the Creator (verse 16). But he then states that he will stand through whatever may come—making him an example to others of living faith (verses 17-19). Habakkuk "now trembles and melts with fear as he seems to hear the on-coming march of...God. The end of the verse [i.e., 16] seems full of paradox. How can he *tremble* and *totter* and at the same time quietly wait with an apparently assured calm? [Continuing in verses] 17-18 His assurance is born of the living faith which these verses so beautifully express. Though everything which, humanly speaking, supports life may fail, yet he can now *rejoice in the Lord*. Personal faith is the practical answer to life's discontents. The contemplation of the history of God with His people, that all His deeds are 'for the salvation of thy people' (v. 13), now leads the prophet to rejoice *in the God of my*

salvation. [Concluding in verse] 19 Thus Habakkuk has discovered the answer to his initial questioning, and his deep contentment with the answer is expressed in the testimony that *he makes my feet like hinds' feet*. He feels as if he is 'walking on air,' so light-hearted and sure-footed is he. Not even the most trying *high places* (cf. Dt. 32:13) through which life's path may lead can daunt the man of faith" (*New Bible Commentary*, notes on verses 16-18).

Let us all keep this focus as we face the difficult times ahead. For beyond them lie better days than mankind has ever seen." [END]

Day 572 – THURSDAY: January 16th

Zephaniah 1

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "The prophet Zephaniah prophesied during the days of King Josiah. We have no knowledge of his background except for what is given in verse 1 regarding his lineage. He was a fourth-generation descendant of Hezekiah. Most sources believe this refers to Hezekiah the king, which would make him a cousin of Josiah, though others correctly maintain that we can't know for sure. In favor, however, is the fact that his lineage is traced back four generations. Commentator Charles Feinberg remarks, "No other prophet has his pedigree carried back so far" (*The Minor Prophets*, 1990, p. 221). Thus, the Hezekiah mentioned would seem to be someone of distinction.

Zephaniah's theme is the Day of the Lord, the time of God's intervention and punishment on the nations. "He uses the expression more than any other prophet of the Old Testament" (p. 221).

Zephaniah prophesied for a few years, beginning some say in the same year as Jeremiah, who began to prophesy in 627 or 626 B.C. Others place Zephaniah at a later date. Because there is no hint of Josiah's reformation in his writings, most scholars believe Zephaniah

prophesied before the reforms began, though some believe the reformation was already underway. The words of the prophet in [Zephaniah 1:2-6](#) do seem to indicate that he prophesied prior to any significant repentance by the nation of Judah—though this could be because the prophecy was meant primarily for the end time, the time of the Day of the Lord.

Indeed, Zephaniah's utterances have dual application. The Day of the Lord was a warning to seventh-century-B.C. Judah that God would punish them when their sins came to a climax—but, more directly, the words of the prophet mainly allude to the coming great Day of the Lord that is in the future. The language of [Zephaniah 1:15](#) is identical to the description of the Day of the Lord as described in [Joel 2:2](#): "A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." The prophet Ezekiel will later use language similar to [Zephaniah 1:18](#), describing the time of the end when a man will deem his wealth (silver and gold) as totally worthless because it provides no shield against the terrible wrath of God ([Ezekiel 7:19](#)).

The message of doom apparently brought Judah to a degree of repentance, along with the warnings of Jeremiah and the leadership of King Josiah. Their great reform is described in [2 Kings 22:3-23:25](#). The repentance was short-lived though, lasting only through the lifetime of Josiah. After this, the people of Judah fell back into grievous sin, and the warnings of the prophets came to pass in some measure through the horrendous invasion by the Babylonians.

Idolatry Then and Now

God states that He will "utterly consume all things from the face of the land" (verse 2), including the "stumbling blocks" (verse 3)—"figurative of idols" (NKJV margin). A large reason for God's anger is Baal worship (verse 4) and because the people "swear by Milcom" (verse 5), an Ammonite god known elsewhere as Molech (see "Milcom," *Smith's*

Bible Dictionary). The worship of Milcom or Molech was reprehensible to God. It included gruesome acts of infant sacrifice ([2 Kings 23:10](#); [Jeremiah 32:35](#)).

Of course, this did fit the situation in the wake of the evil reigns of Manasseh and Amon over Judah. Yet Zephaniah's prophecy, it must be remembered, is primarily for the end time, as it concerns the coming Day of the Lord. How, then, does the prophecy apply in these last days? Notice that God is going to stretch out His hand "against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (verse 4). Jerusalem today is a city of Jews, Muslims and various Christian denominations. Can these groups be labeled as idolatrous? Indeed, they can. As surprising as it may seem, many of their doctrines and practices are derived from paganism.

Judaism was eventually corrupted by Babylonian and Greek religion. Mainstream Christianity adopted many of the same concepts and, to gain preeminence over the Roman Empire, embraced still more and more from paganism. Islam arose out of a blend of Jewish and false Christian concepts and Arab mythology. Notice that the people are guilty of syncretism—worshiping God but with pagan concepts and practices, which is viewed by God as their worshiping false deities (compare verse 5).

Consider that Molech is "probably to be equated with...the Roman god Saturn or Mithra" (Jan Knappert, *Encyclopaedia of Middle Eastern Mythology and Religion*, 1993, p. 206, "Molech"). Mithra has been identified with Baal, the sun god. His birthday was celebrated in ancient times on December 25. The modern holiday of Christmas derives from this ancient celebration and the Roman Saturnalia—in honor of Saturn, essentially the same god—which immediately preceded it. (To learn more, download or request our free booklet [Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?](#))

In verse 4, the phrase "idolatrous priests" is left untranslated in the King James Version. It is the Hebrew *chemarim*. "The Hebrew root means 'black' (from the black garments which they wore or the marks which they branded on their foreheads)" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on verse 4). As we will soon read, Josiah removed the chemarim of his day (see [2 Kings 23:5](#)). Yet it is interesting to consider that such "black-robed priests" could designate various groups today—from Catholic priests to Greek Orthodox presbyters to orthodox Jewish rabbis to many Muslim imams. This may be the "foreign apparel" of verse 8—in that case denoting gentile religious garb—although the subject of verse 8 could also be people who exploit others to become wealthy, enabling them to purchase exotic foreign clothing.

In [Zephaniah 1:9](#), God says He will punish "all those who leap over the threshold." *The Nelson Study Bible* says this "may refer to a pagan practice like one mentioned in [1 Samuel 5:5](#). The priests of Dagon would not step on the doorway of the temple to Dagon because the hands and the head of Dagon had fallen there." Are there *modern* participants of Dagonism? Surprisingly, a case can be made that "the two-horned mitre, which the Pope wears, when he sits on the high altar at Rome and receives the adoration of the Cardinals, is the very mitre worn by Dagon, the fish-god of the Philistines and Babylonians" (Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, 1916, 1959, p. 215).

The "Fish Gate" of verse 10 "received its name from the fish market which was near it. Through it passed those who used to bring fish from the lake of Tiberias and Jordan" (*JFB Commentary*, note on verse 10). Perhaps this is actually a figurative reference here to those by whom the fish-god Dagon, alluded to in the previous verse, has come into Jerusalem. In the same context we are told of punishment to befall the "merchant people"—"lit[erally], the 'Canaanite people': irony: all the merchant people of Jerusalem are very Canaanites in greed for gain and in idolatries" (note on verse 11).

Yet for all this, far too many sit complacently, believing "the Lord will not do good, nor will He do evil" (verse 12)—meaning He won't do anything. The apostle Peter referred to such people as "scoffers...in the last days" who say, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" ([2 Peter 3:3-4](#)). Yet, as the book of Zephaniah makes clear, the scoffers are sorely mistaken. Those sacrificing to false gods (participating in false worship) will themselves become a sacrifice of God if they fail to repent (verses 7-8; compare [Isaiah 34:6](#); [Revelation 19:21](#)), slain for the sake of all mankind" [END]

Day 573 – FRIDAY: January 17th

Zephaniah 2

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "In verses 1-3 of chapter 2, Zephaniah addresses an "undesirable nation," calling them the "meek of the earth." The latter expression would seem to denote the Church of God—particularly when we view the prophecy in context as dealing mainly with the end time. Moreover, these people are described as those who have upheld God's justice or righteous judgment, thus walking by His laws—again pointing to true Christians. The Church is described as a spiritual *nation* in the New Testament ([1 Peter 2:9-10](#)). And it is certainly undesirable in the eyes of the world—as God's people are, as Christ was, *despised, hated and persecuted* by the world (see [John 15:18-20](#)).

If these Christians will *gather together* ([Zephaniah 2:1](#); compare [Hebrews 10:25](#)), *seek God* in prayer and study of His Word (see [Zephaniah 2:3](#)), and seek *righteousness* (obedience) and *humility* (same verse), they have an opportunity to be hidden and protected during the time of God's punishment—in line with other prophecies that describe God's faithful people being sheltered in a place of refuge in the end time (compare [Revelation 12:14](#)).

Interestingly, Zephaniah's name means "The Eternal Hides" or "Hidden of the Eternal"—which may have factored into the wording of [Zephaniah 2:3](#).

Verses 4-5 foretell divine retribution to come on the people living in the land of the Philistines, here synonymous with Canaan—which, in an end-time setting, would appear to indicate the modern Palestinian people. The Jews, returning from captivity, will be given the former Philistine seacoast, including the Gaza Strip, which is now occupied by the Palestinians (verses 6-7). In verses 8-10, ruin is prophesied to come upon Moab and Ammon, which are areas of modern Jordan, still the homeland of these ancient peoples. And this is said to be because of their pride and because they will have reproached God's people and threatened their borders. It is not clear whether the reproached and threatened people of God here are the physical Israelites or the spiritual people of God referred to in verses 1-3. If the latter, the whole passage would seem to be parallel with [Isaiah 16](#), where Moab is apparently punished for refusing to hide God's outcasts (see highlights for [Isaiah 16](#)).

Verse 11 again shows the passage to be primarily an end-time prophecy, as people from all the shores of the nations will come to worship God after He utterly wipes out idolatry.

The chapter culminates with judgment against Assyria and its capital city Nineveh (verses 13-15). Babylon and other forces conquered ancient Assyria and laid waste to her proud capital in 612 B.C. No doubt this prophecy did in part refer to that ancient overthrow—as it was yet a few years away when Zephaniah wrote. But realize again that this is mainly a prophecy of the end of this age. Nineveh is directly parallel here with end-time Babylon, speaking the same words and suffering the same penalty (verse 15; compare [Isaiah 47:10-11](#)). So it is likely that the prophecy is primarily aimed at Assyria of the last days—a German-dominated European superpower also known as Babylon (see highlights

for [Isaiah 10](#))—and its future seat of power. The prophet Nahum, as we will later see, prophesied against Nineveh around this time too. And in his prophecy there is also a very close parallel between Assyria and end-time Babylon.” [END]

Day 574 – SATURDAY: January 18th

Zephaniah 3

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Zephaniah 3 begins with an indictment against Jerusalem, probably representative of the Jewish nation as a whole—and perhaps even of all Israel in the end time, since Jerusalem was the ancient capital of all 12 tribes. Four specific charges are brought against the people. Verses 3-4 indict four classes of leaders for their corruption, and God promises He will bring them to justice. The priests not only don't teach the laws of God, "they have done violence to the law"—they despise and ridicule God's law as being a yoke, burden and curse that has been "done away with" or "annulled." God warns that He has judged other nations and His nation should expect no less. Yet sadly, the people continue to rebel (verse 7). In Zephaniah's day, there was a measure of repentance at the time of Josiah's reforms. And in the future, all Israel will at last repent, as we see later in this chapter.

Verse 8 describes the return of Jesus Christ to fight the nations gathered against Him (compare [Revelation 19:19](#)). An interesting feature about [Zephaniah 3:8](#) is that, according to Charles Feinberg, it is the only verse in the Old Testament that contains all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

The chapter then progresses forward into the wonderful, peaceful reign of Christ over all nations—that is, over all those who are left after the cataclysmic wars of the end time. Verse 9 describes God providing a "pure language" for the peoples of the earth, much better suited for praising and serving God. Today's languages are filled with pagan

references and other ungodly elements. That won't be so in the language of the future. The tone of the book from this point on is quite positive, as conditions that will exist on earth under the rule of the Kingdom of God are described. Verse 15 prophesies, "The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst."

Feinberg states that the "appointed assembly" of verse 18 refers to the "feasts of the Lord" (p. 235). This parallels [Zechariah 14:16](#), which tells us that the Feast of Tabernacles will be observed at that time. The chapter ends with the wonderful truth that, though God will bring national punishment on the Israelites, He will still regather those who are left to at last be the model nation Israel was intended to be (verses 19-20). They will then be, as verse 12 shows, the meek and humble people of God." [END]