

Nahum

“The Nature of God”

I. Introduction to Nahum

Nahum is the thirty-fourth book of the Old Testament and the seventh among the Minor Prophets. Very little is known about Nahum, the man. He was from Elkosh, but no compelling evidence has been found to establish the location of the town. Historically, it has been viewed as a town in northern Israel; perhaps on the Galilee; possibly Capernaum: Kephrah Nahum – town of Nahum.

We know Nahum was a prophet. Internal evidence suggests he was perhaps from Judah. His message declares the fall of Nineveh. He is the only prophet to refer to his message as a book. Suggesting he was more of an author of the written word than the spoken word.

His name means comfort. We might call him Mr. Compassion. It is critical that those called to declare judgment have a compassionate heart for the lost. His message was directed at the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. His warning was given during the zenith of Assyrian power under the reign of Assurbanipal. Nahum foretold the total collapse of Nineveh in the following verses.

1:8 - utter end

1:9 - utter end

1:14 - no longer

2:6 - river will open gates

2:9 - treasures will be taken

3:2-3 - describes the city becoming a battle ground

History records the accuracy of Nahum's predictions. In 612 B.C., after a series of weak rulers and civil conflict, an ally force consisting of Medes, Persians and Babylonians, joined forces under Nabonidus, King of Babylon. They attacked Nineveh and defeated Assyria. According to the Babylonian Chronicle, or ancient Babylonian records, Nineveh was breached and fell in 612 B.C. The Greek historian, Diodorus, who wrote mainly between 60 and 30 B.C., relates that the Tigris River, which ran through the city, flooded, and broke down a portion of the wall. This allowed the enemy armies to enter and defeat Assyria in the streets of Nineveh. They plundered the palace and temple of all the treasures of Nineveh. Nineveh was lost for 2000 years.

This was not the only message given to Nineveh. One hundred years earlier, Jonah preached and many repented, thus saving the city from destruction at that time. There are three lessons to learn from Nineveh:

1. Turning back to sin

2 Peter 2:22 “But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’”
Galatians 5:1 “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”

Also:

Galatians 5:7

2 Timothy 4:10

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2. Failing to pass on to the next generation. How?

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates”.

3. God not only deals with the sin of the individual (Ezekiel 18:20), but he also holds nations culpable for their sin. The indictments against Nineveh are national, not individual.

II. Outline of Nahum

Nahum naturally divides into three chapters. These chapters all follow the main idea of the book – judgment for sin.

J.S. Baxter titles each chapter as:

Section 1	Chapter 1	Judgment Declared
Section 2	Chapter 2	Judgment Described
Section 3	Chapter 3	Judgment Deserved

Section 1 Chapter 1 Judgment Declared

1:1 Serves as an introduction to the book

1:2-3 contain the key verses, carrying the main theme of the book: “God is . . .”

1:4-6 are general statements regarding the power and authority of God

He rebukes the sea.

Mountains quake before Him.

The earth heaves at His presence.

1:6 Asks, “Who can stand against Him?” This question is particularly important because it highlights Assyria’s pride. They saw themselves as undefeatable.

They conquered many nations and formed the largest empire the world had ever seen.

They reigned almost undefeated for 200 years.

Nineveh was a vast and seemingly impenetrable city with walls 100 feet high and 30 feet wide, and 200 foot towers. The city boasted of one million residents. Farming and the Tigris River provided sustenance even when under siege.

Pride led to their fall. They also ignored the Law of God and saw nothing wrong with their actions. Instead of weeping and repenting, they celebrated their sin.

1:8-14 Judgment is declared against Nineveh.

1:8 (and 2:14) The flood waters would open the gates, resulting in loss

1:9 and 14 He will make an utter end of Nineveh

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Section 2 Chapter 2 Judgment Described

This chapter gives details of the collapse of Nineveh.

2:1- 6 describes the chaos of battle

2:1 The city is fortified

2:3 The battle begins.

2:4 The battle rages in the streets.

2:6 The gates of the city are opened by rivers flooding.

2:7-10 The spoils of war.

2:13 The reason for the fall is declared: “I am against you.”

When we choose to live opposed to the Word of God, we in turn live in opposition to God. If you are against Him, He is against you. Matthew 12:30 states, “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”

Section 3 Chapter 3 Judgment Deserved

Reasons are listed for God judging Nineveh

3:1 bloody city, full of violence

3:4 harlotry

3:4 sorcery

3:8 pride

III. Why Study Nahum

The key verses of the book of Nahum are 1:2-3, “God *is* jealous, and the LORD avenges; the LORD avenges and *is* furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves *wrath* for His enemies; the LORD *is* slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.”

We study Nahum to learn the true nature of God.

The Jealousy of God

1:2 “God is jealous.”

Jealousy is a common term in our vernacular. The dictionary defines it as “feelings of envy or suspicion.” We have all felt it in ourselves and seen it in others. Bible characters were plagued by jealousy as displayed by Joseph’s brothers and Saul.

Jealousy is birthed out of concern for self; insecurity

Jealousy is often coupled with possessiveness and suspicion

Jealousy produces rage and desire for revenge

The Hebrew word “becoming dark red”, illustrates emotions that stem from jealousy. No question about it, jealousy is a character flaw. Yet we read, “God is jealous”!

God is jealous because He loves you so much. He wants to keep us for Himself, not because it’s best for him, but because it is best for us. God’s jealousy is something different. It is not a character weakness, but strength. God is not resentful against us, but has deep love, and desires our best. Jealous speaks of the zeal He has for what belongs to Him.

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Jealous for his glory or His name.

Exodus 34:14 “(for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God)”

He will not share that nor allow false worship.

John 14:6 “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Jesus is the only way; and God won't share because they don't save.

Jealous for His law.

Exodus 20:5 “You shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,”

God must judge sin.

Jealous for his people.

Zechariah 2:8 “For thus says the LORD of hosts: “He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.”

2 Corinthians 11:2 “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

God will not tolerate infidelity. We are his alone; we may not have other ‘gods’. We are to love Him first. That should not surprise us, we feel the same.

The Vengeance of God

Unholy jealousy produces revenge (getting even). The goal of revenge is to cause the wrong doer to suffer the same or greater pain that you have.

God's jealousy produces vengeance. Vengeance is a very strong word. Too strong for most applications we face. It means to punish offenses (Nahum 1:3). It is synonymous with wrath, meaning ‘fierce anger’.

God loves all that is good and opposes that which is not.

The Bible speaks of His ‘wrath burning hot’ over sin, ours does too. Randy Stonehill's lyric describes this.

AND I'VE SEEN THE WOODEN SHACKS
ROW AFTER ENDLESS ROW
WHERE OPEN SEWAGE FLOWS
IN THE SHADOW OF THE FACTORY
I'VE SEEN THE CHILDREN'S FACES
HOPE BURNING IN THEIR EYES
TOO YOUNG TO REALIZE
THEY FACE A LIFE OF MISERY

Chorus

CAN HELL BURN HOT ENOUGH
TO PAY FOR ALL THIS SUFFERING
THE MURDER OF THE INNOCENT
CAN HELL BURN HOT ENOUGH
TO BALANCE OUT THESE SCALES
CAN HELL BURN HOT ENOUGH

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Remember, Nahum is not God’s first messenger with a warning for Nineveh.

The Mercy of God.

“The Lord is slow to anger. . .” Nahum 1:3

“The Lord is good.” Nahum 1:7

We read through Jonah and saw that God offered mercy and pardon to the people. God went to great lengths to make the message possible. Jonah’s journey was not easy. He had to overcome prejudice, storms and a great fish.

Colossians 1:24 “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,”

The only thing lacking in the suffering of Christ is what you must endure to get the message to others. What are some of those things?

When the message of mercy is refused, divine retribution for sin must be met.

Not long after Jonah, Nineveh returned to their sin.

“God will always forgive sin repented of, but must judge sin continued in.” His compassion will not be exercised at the sake of righteousness. God has not changed. The god who judged Nineveh for unrepentant sin will judge the sin of those who refuse Christ. He is not one bit less severe today. John 3:36 “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” The cross magnifies His vengeance. But wrath is always tempered with mercy; God provides escape.

Noah at the flood

Lot at Sodom

Rahab at Jericho

You and me at the cross

Apart from Christ, we are under wrath.

Ephesians 2:13 “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

In Christ we are saved from wrath

Romans 5:9 “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”

The Fulfilled Prophecy of God

Nahum is a book of prophecy. It tells the story of God’s judgment and the collapse of an empire. The collapse is described with great detail.

IV. Jesus in Nahum

Chapter 1:15