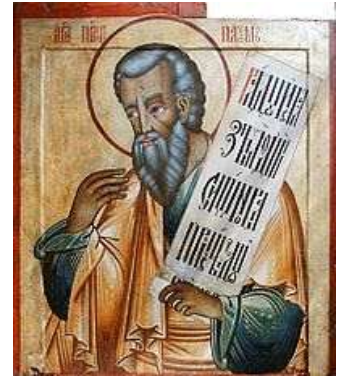


Nahum

By Ross Callaghan

<http://rosscallaghan.yolasite.com>



Nahum is the seventh of the twelve Minor Prophets. It is *an oracle concerning Nineveh* and describes God's judgment on Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, a city on the East Bank of the Tigris River, in modern-day Iraq.

Author The prophet Nahum. *Nahum* means “consolation, compassion, comfort”. His name fits his message as he wrote to console Judah as she was being oppressed by the Assyrians. We don't know much about Nahum, other than he was an *Elkoshite* 1:1 which may mean he came from a small village in the Galilee, in Judah.

Date The prophecy describes the fall of the Egyptian city of Thebes 3:8-10, and predicts the fall of Nineveh 2:1-3:19, so it was probably given somewhere between 663BC when Thebes fell to the Assyrians, and 612BC when Nineveh fell to the Babylonians and Medes.

Background The Assyrian Empire dominated the Middle East in the middle of the seventh century BC. Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria and had repented of its sin and turned to the Lord under Jonah. It wasn't long after this, though, that the Assyrians fell back into sin and rebellion against God. Nahum prophesied that God would judge the city for its sin and would destroy it. The prophecy was fulfilled when Nineveh was destroyed in 612BC by Nebopolasser, the father of Nebuchadnezzar.



The Assyrian Empire

Message God is loving and good and wants to bless, but He is also just. Nineveh had rebelled against Him and destroyed Israel and would now reap what they had sown. Nineveh would fall and be totally demolished.

Outline

Chapter 1. God's anger against Nineveh.

Nahum starts, not with Nineveh, but with God.

He shows that God is:

- ⤴ *jealous and avenging* for those who sin against Him
- ⤴ *filled with wrath* towards their sin
- ⤴ *slow to anger*
- ⤴ *great in power*
- ⤴ *good*, and a *refuge* for those *in times of trouble*
- ⤴ *caring* towards those *who trust in Him*

Verses 2-8 are an alphabetical psalm reflecting on God's power in the world. Each of the verses start with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet – but this isn't obvious in our English translations.

But God will *make an end of Nineveh* through an *overwhelming flood*. (Nineveh fell in 612BC when flood

waters breached her walls and the Babylonians were able to storm the city). What the Ninevites had plotted against the Lord would be brought to an end. She had *plotted evil* and *afflicted Judah* but now the *yoke* and *shackles* on Judah would be torn away and Nineveh would be destroyed.

This is good news for Judah. Out of the mountains comes one who *brings good news; who proclaims peace, (a possible reference to the coming Messiah)*. No more would Judah be invaded or afflicted.

Chapter 2. Prophecy of Nineveh's fall.

Using vivid and colourful language, Nahum now describes how Nineveh will fall. An attacker will advance against her and her walls will not be able to keep them out. That's because *it is decreed* (by God) that the city will be *exiled and carried away*. Nineveh will be *pillaged, plundered and stripped, because God is against her*. She will be *devoured*, as by lions, and the voices of her messengers *will no longer be heard*. At the same time God will restore the splendour of Jacob, like the splendour of Israel.

This section shows us that God is at work in history and that ultimately those who oppose Him will be totally defeated. God will never allow His people to be conquered because He is such a mighty and caring God and He loves us so much.

Chapter 3. Prophecy of judgment on Nineveh.

Nahum now pronounces a series of *woes* on the *city of blood*, almost celebrating the fact that the city would be judged and would fall. This was typical of Old Testament prophets who often viewed the godless nations of the world as the personification of evil. Nahum describes Nineveh's downfall in detail and attributes it to her immorality and involvement in sorcery. She had *enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft*, but God was against her and would reveal her shame.

Nahum then pointed to other countries that had fallen, like Thebes in Egypt, and showed that Assyria was to be just like them.

Nothing they would do could prevent the destruction that was to come. Assyria would be *scattered with no-one to gather them*, nothing could *heal their wounds*, and all who heard of it would *clap their hands* because of her *endless cruelty*.

Even though Assyria ruled the world for a long period of time it fell exactly as prophesied by Nahum and was taken over by the Babylonians and Medes.

Today all that is left of Nineveh is a mound called Tell Kuyunjik, the 'mound of many sheep'. It has recently been excavated revealing much of how the city was burned and destroyed.



Discussion questions

Nahum prophesied against Assyria, the dominant nation in the world at the time and predicted its downfall. Why did Nahum prophesy against Assyria? What factors led to Assyria's downfall? Are these or similar factors still present in dominant nations like USA, Russia and China today? What is the message of Nahum to these nations?

Does God still judge nations today? If so, how? How could we tell if a nation was under God's judgment?

What can Christians do to prevent God's judgment on their lives, families, communities and nations?

What does the book of Nahum tell us about the character and nature of God?

What have you learned from your study of Nahum? How will you apply this in your life?