

Nahum

“Jehovah is a jealous God and avenges; Jehovah avenges and is full of wrath; Jehovah takes vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserves wrath for his enemies”

(Nahum 1:2)

Nahum the Prophet

Nahum is known as the Elkoshite (one from Elkosh of which nothing is known). Nahum received a divine vision that revealed a condemning judgment against Nineveh and Assyria (Nahum 3:7, 18).

Date

Two points of interest help us date the book of Nahum. First is the fall of Noamon. Noamon was the sacred name for the great city of Thebes in Egypt. Isaiah had prophesied that the Egyptians would be carried away as captives by the Assyrians (Isa. 20:3-4). Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, reigned from 669 to 627 BC. Assurbanipal gained control over Egypt during the year 667 BC (probably the date of Noamon's (Thebes) fall). Nineveh fell in 612 BC to Nabopolassar of Babylon. Nahum's prophecy describes the destruction and carrying away of the powerful Egyptian Thebes as a past event (Nahum 3:8ff) and the destruction of Nineveh as a future event (Nahum 1:1; 3:7). The date of the book is, therefore, between 667 and 612 BC.

Theme

Nineveh and the Assyrians will fall because of their wickedness. The spiritual whoredom of Assyria is defined by their devising evil against Jehovah (Nahum 1:11), giving wicked council (Nahum 1:11), worshipping graven images (Nahum 1:14), being vile (Nahum 1:14), being full of lies (Nahum 3:1), forcibly seizing and taking property that did not belong to them (Nahum 3:1), and practicing witchcraft (Nahum 3:4).

Content

Assyria was once an oasis for merchants due to trade and commerce (Nahum 2:8). Those whom she conquered provided a rich storehouse of wealth (Nahum 2:9). There was not one nation that had not been touched by her cruelty (Nahum 3:19). God used the wicked nature of the Assyrians to accomplish His end of stroking Israel with the rod of correction (cf. Isa. 10:5). The time of Assyria's punishment, however, had now come (cf. Isa. 10:24-27). The once feared, wealthy, and strong nation was about to be reduced to trembling knees and pale faces for the fear they would now experience at the hands of Jehovah God (cf. Nahum 2:10).

The sovereignty of Jehovah God is depicted in said actions. The Lord God Almighty has authority and power over all creation. The sea, storms, lush vegetative areas, mountains, “*yea the world and all that dwell therein*” are subject to His will (cf. Nahum 1:3-5). Jehovah called upon Assyria to fortify herself and build up her military might for the day of her judgment (cf. Nahum 1:12; 3:14). Though Assyria did all within her power to resist, she was going to be reduced to ashes. The sovereignty of Jehovah would be directed at Assyria in the form of the Babylonians. Babylon would crush Assyria with the horrendous bloodshed that Assyria had used on her enemies. Nahum records, “*The noise of the whip, and the noise of the rattling of wheels, and prancing horses, and bounding chariots, the horseman mounting, and the flashing sword, and the glittering spear, and a multitude of slain, and a great heap of corpses, and there is no end of the bodies; they stumble upon their bodies*” (Nahum 3:2-3). Jehovah would use Babylon as His “*battle axe*” (Jer. 51:20) to “*dash in pieces*” (Nahum 2:1) Assyria. When the Lord was finished with Babylon, He would punish her for her wickedness as well (cf. Jer. 51:24).

Application

Those who do not bow their heads to the sovereign will of God shall be eternally punished. Jehovah God is the Lord of all flesh (Jer. 32:27). All will one day bow their stubborn knees before him (cf. Phil. 2:10). Jesus will judge each man and woman by his deeds he has done (Rev. 20:12-13). God's word will be the standard by which man is judged (Jn. 12:48). Let all of humanity recognize the sovereign rule of Jehovah God and submit to His precepts before it is everlasting too late.

Chapter 1

I. The Awesome Power of Jehovah (1:1-8):

- A. *"The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite"* (1:1).
1. The word "*burden*" is also translated "oracle" in the ASV footnotes. Nahum is delivering an oracle (i.e., an utterance made by an agent by divine revelation).
 2. Like Ezekiel, Nahum has seen "*visions*" of divine revelation in relationship to the Assyrian city of Nineveh (cf. Ezek. 1:1) (see study # 1; Bible Inspiration).
- B. *"Jehovah is a jealous God and avenges; Jehovah avenges and is full of wrath; Jehovah takes vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserves wrath for his enemies"* (1:2).
1. The very mention of Nineveh conjures up the identity of Jehovah being a jealous, vengeful, and wrathful God who is against those whose deeds are wicked.
 2. The enemies of God will feel the full brunt of His anger. God is likened unto a husband to Israel. The enemy is likened unto one who is flirting with a husband's wife. Jehovah is jealous and thereby unleashes his wrath and vengeance upon the enemies.
- C. *"Jehovah is slow to anger, and great in power, and will by no means clear the guilty: Jehovah hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet"* (1:3).
1. Nahum reveals the fierce wrath of God; however, He too is "*slow to anger.*" If an unruly people are feeling the brunt of His wrath it is because they have exhausted His patience and longsuffering qualities.
 2. Those guilty of such wrath will experience the power of God in condemning judgment. The guilty will by no means be cleared of their offences while in a state of rebellion.
- D. *"He rebukes the sea, and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers: Bashan languishes and Carmel; and the flower of Lebanon languishes"* (1:4).
1. The power of God is revealed over nature itself. God has the power to rebuke the sea and rivers and they would be dry. Jesus at one time rebuked the stormy Sea of Galilee and it was calm (cf. Matt. 8:23-27). God exercised control over the animal kingdom as well (cf. Numb. 22:21ff; Jonah 2:10 (see study # 2; The Sovereignty of God)).
 2. Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon were places where great soils and lush vegetation existed; however, they too were subject to God's will. Nature itself is subject to God's will. Though the sea and rivers be places of water and Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon places of vegetation they were all subject to God. If it be God's will all will take a 180 degree turn and dry up.
- E. *"The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt; and the earth is upheaved at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein"* (1:5).
1. The mighty mountains and hills of earth quake in fear for Jehovah.
 2. The entire earth and all its inhabitants are subject to Jehovah God and thereby all quake at his very presence.
 3. The power of God causes all of nature and humanity to quake in fear.

F. *“Who can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken asunder by him”* (1:6).

1. Nahum challenges all creation that one may be found to stand before Jehovah’s wrath and not be affected. Shall the mountains, mighty rivers or seas stand before God and not be affected? Shall any man stand before Jehovah and not be affected by His great power? The answer is obvious. No man or part of nature can withstand the might of God.
2. When God’s fiery wrath is poured out not one shall stand.

G. *“Jehovah is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knows them that take refuge in him. But with an over-running flood he will make a full end of her place, and will pursue his enemies into darkness”* (1:7-8).

1. Those who recognize the awesome power of God will run to Him in subjection seeking refuge from the storms of life. Those who do recognize the power and sovereign rule of God are known by Him! To be known of God is to be in good standing (cf. Gal. 4:9).
2. Those not known of God will not escape His wrath. Like a flood that runs through a town destroying everything in its path so Jehovah will end the place of the sinful.

II. The Destruction of Assyria Foretold (1:9-13):

A. *“What do ye devise against Jehovah? He will make a full end; affliction shall not rise up the second time. For entangled like thorns, and drunken as with their drink, they are consumed utterly as dry stubble”* (1:9-10).

1. The oracle against Nineveh and namely Assyria is the subject of Nahum (1:1; 3:7, 18). The prophet thereby poses the question to the Assyrians. *“What do ye devise against Jehovah?”* There will be nothing the Assyrian can do to defeat Jehovah’s purpose and wrath against them. They are mere men and He is God. Jehovah shall defeat them so soundly that they shall not rise up a second time.
2. God used the wicked ways of Assyria to accomplish the punishment of an evil Israel (cf. Isa. 10:5-6). When God’s purpose was achieved; i.e., sinful Israel was soundly defeated and exiled by the Assyrians, then the Lord would thoroughly punish the wicked nation of Assyria (cf. Isa. 10:24ff). Again, not only does the sovereignty of God extend to the natural elements of the world but also the kingdoms of men. God is in complete control (see study # 2).
3. Assyria was deluded with the wine of pride much like Judah (Jer. 13:9-14) and the Babylonians were (Hab. 2:5) (see study # 3; Self Delusion). Assyria considered their fortresses and army to be as impenetrable as a thorny hedge.

B. *“There is one gone forth out of thee, that devises evil against Jehovah, that counsels wickedness. Thus saith Jehovah: though they be in full strength, and likewise many, even so shall they be cut down, and he shall pass away. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. And now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder”* (1:11-13).

1. The *“one gone forth out of thee”* (i.e., Assyria) is probably the entire spirit of rebellion displayed on the part of the Assyrians toward Jehovah God.
2. Jehovah would strike Assyria in their days of *“full strength”* and take them down. Jehovah has admittedly *“afflicted”* Israel with the Assyrians due to their sin. Assyria; however, will never rise again to afflict the people of God.

III. God pronounces death to Assyria and thanksgiving for Judah (1:14-15):

A. *“And Jehovah hath given commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image; I will make thy grave; for thou art vile”* (1:14).

1. The grave of death is prepared for Assyria by God. No graven or molten images of Assyria would be able to save them. Jehovah would cut off the Assyrian gods.
2. Why would Assyria be defeated and cut out of existence? Assyria was judged by God’s revealed standards and found to be *“vile.”*

- B. *“Behold, upon the mountains the feet of him that brings good tidings, that publishes peace! Keep thy feasts, O Judah, perform thy vows; for the wicked one shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off”* (1:15).
1. Nahum now addresses Judah (the Southern kingdom). Judah is to rejoice because Assyria is soundly defeated by Jehovah God. The Lord will soon send a messenger to the people of Judah to reveal this good news!
 2. Let Judah rejoice with feasts and vows of thanksgiving. Though the event has not taken place it is sure to come.

Chapter 2

I. The Destruction of Assyria and Nineveh (2:1-7):

- A. *“He that dashes in pieces is come up against thee: keep the fortress, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily. For Jehovah restores the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel; for the emptiers have emptied them out, and destroyed their vine branches”* (2:1-2).
1. *“He that dashes in pieces”* is none other than the Babylonians. The prophet Jeremiah wrote, *“Babylon hath been a golden cup in Jehovah’s hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are mad... Thou art my battle-axe and weapons of war: and with thee will I break in pieces the nations; and with thee will I destroy kingdoms”* (Jer. 51:7, 20).
 2. Jehovah would use Babylon to destroy Assyria and there would be no amount of fortification that would stop them. Assyria had emptied out the land of Israel and now they were to be punished for their *“vile”* ways (cf. Nahum 1:14).
- B. *“The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots flash with steel in the day of his preparation, and the cypress spears are brandished. The chariots rage in the streets; they rush to and fro in the broad ways: the appearance of them is like torches; they run like the lightnings”* (2:3-4).
1. Nahum speaks of Babylonian infantry and chariots as though they have already entered the city of Nineveh to destroy.
 2. The scene is one of chaos. Chariots are rushing in every direction as quick as lightning and the people of Nineveh are falling dead.
- C. *“He remembers his nobles: they stumble in their march; they make haste to the wall thereof, and the mantelet is prepared. The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved. And it is decreed: she is uncovered, she is carried away; and her handmaids moan as with the voice of doves, beating upon their breasts”* (2:5-7).
1. Under siege, Nineveh remembers her noble fighters and summons them to the wall of the city. The men, likely out of terror, stumble to their positions on the wall.
 2. Meanwhile, the Babylonian *“mantelets”* are moving toward the city (i.e., towers that sat on four wheels used by a siege army to allow their men protection from arrows and a climbing device [or in some cases battering ram]) over the cities walls).
 3. Once the wall is breached a flood of Babylonian infantry men will engulf the city. The city is finished and the women moan in despair.
- D. *“But Nineveh hath been from of old like a pool of water: yet they flee away. Stand, stand, they cry; but none looks back”* (2:8).
1. During days past Nineveh was like an oasis in the desert where men would gladly come. Now; however, people flee in terror.
 2. The military general command that the men stay and fight yet the men of war flee and *“none looks back.”*

- E. *“Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold; for there is no end of the store, the glory of all goodly furniture. She is empty, and void, and waste; and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and anguish is in all loins, and the faces of them all are waxed pale”* (2:9-10).
1. Jehovah God speaks to the Babylonians and tells them to take of all the riches of Assyria that have been collected from her plundering of other nations and peoples. The Assyrian treasures are described as having *“no end of the store.”*
 2. When the plundering is complete Assyria will be emptied and void. Nineveh’s inhabitants, once strong and fierce, now are those whose knees knock together in fear and their faces are pale due to their terror. One mightier than they has arrived and humbled them.
- F. *“Where is the den of the lions, and the feeding-place of the young lions, where the lion and the lioness walked, the lion’s whelp, and none made them afraid? The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his caves with prey, and his dens with ravin”* (2:11-12).
1. Jehovah poses a question to the Assyrians. Where are all your mighty men who without conscience destroyed and devoured other nations? Where has the fear of your enemies gone?
 2. The Assyrians devoured and took captive many yet wherein is their strength now? The point is clear, yes they were and are mighty yet standing against Jehovah God they are melted away and exposed as nothing in comparison to the great God.
- G. *“Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions; and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard”* (2:13).
1. The Assyrian was once the rod of correction in the hands of Jehovah God yet now they are reduced to a shaken, destroyed, and plundered nation.
 2. It is a fearful state of being to have Jehovah God say, *“I am against thee.”*

Chapter 3

I. The aftermath of Nineveh’s Fall (3:1-7):

- A. *“Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and rapine; the prey departs not”* (3:1).
1. Nineveh was bloody due to its siege and destruction by Babylon.
 2. The sins of Assyria included lies and rapine (i.e., forcible seizure of another's property).
- B. *“The noise of the whip, and the noise of the rattling of wheels, and prancing horses, and bounding chariots, the horseman mounting, and the flashing sword, and the glittering spear, and a multitude of slain, and a great heap of corpses, and there is no end of the bodies; they stumble upon their bodies”* (3:2-3).
1. Nahum now gives a graphic vision of the aftermath. The battle has been fought and the panoramic picture is one of complete destruction for Nineveh and its inhabitants.
 2. The Babylonians can scarcely walk or ride through the streets due to the amount of dead bodies.
- C. *“because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favored harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that sells nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts”* (3:4).
1. Jehovah is justified in His actions against Assyria due to her *“multitude of whoredoms and witchcrafts.”*
 2. As a woman of seduction and deception Nineveh gained the favor of many and then did them harm.
- D. *“Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will uncover thy skirts upon thy face; and I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. And I will cast*

abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing-stock. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?" (3:5-7).

1. The nations of the world would now see Assyria in all her shame and nakedness.
2. Through military defeat Jehovah would cause Assyria to be viewed as a filthy and vile people. No one will mourn over her fall. All the nations that were cruelly treated by her would now rejoice over her fall.

II. Nineveh's Doom (3:8-

A. *"Art thou better than Noamon, that was situated among the rivers, that had the waters round about her; whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was of the sea? Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity; her young children also were dashed in pieces at the head of all the streets; and the cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains"* (3:8-10).

1. Noamon was the sacred name for the great city of Thebes in Egypt. Isaiah had prophesied that the Egyptians would be carried away as captives by the Assyrians (Isa. 20:3-4). Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, reigned from 669 to 627 BC. Assurbanipal gained control over Egypt during the year 667 BC (probably the date of Noamon {Thebes} downfall). Nineveh fell in 612 BC to Nabopolassar of Babylon.
2. A city that appeared to the world to be impenetrable was brought low. Surely pride comes before the fall (cf. Prov. 16:18).
3. If Noamon did not stand against Jehovah then Nineveh surely will not.

B. *"Thou also shalt be drunken; thou shalt be hid; thou also shalt seek a stronghold because of the enemy. All thy fortresses shall be like fig-trees with the first-ripe figs: if they be shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater"* (3:11-12).

1. Nineveh shall drink the full cup of God's wrath and be drunk in destruction.
2. Though she seek the help of others and fortify her walls she will be shaken and devoured like a fig tree with ripe fruit.

C. *"Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women; the gates of thy land are set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire hath devoured thy bars"* (3:13).

1. Like weakened women Nineveh's defense would not be able to stand against the strong enemy.
2. Their efforts to fortify the city amounted to having gates wide open for the enemy to devour them.

D. *"Draw thee water for the siege; strengthen thy fortresses; go into the clay, and tread the mortar; make strong the brick-kiln. There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off; it shall devour thee like the canker-worm: make thy self many as the canker-worm; make thyself many as the locust"* (3:14-15).

1. Nahum calls upon Nineveh to do their vain work of gathering water and fortifying the walls of the city. Nineveh is called upon to gather up all the fighting men they can accumulate.
2. No matter the preparations and accumulations their demise and destruction is inevitable.

E. *"Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the canker-worm ravages and flees away. Thy princes are as the locusts, and thy marshals as the swarms of grasshoppers, which encamp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun arises they flee away, and their place is not known where they are"* (3:16-17).

1. Though merchants gained wealth from Nineveh they are no where to be found in the time of her trouble. They have taken from the city and now leave it devoured.
2. The governing and military leaders (i.e., princes and marshals) are numerous; however, they too flee the city due to fear.

- F. *“Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; thy nobles are at rest; thy people are scattered upon the mountains, and there is none to gather them. There is no assuaging of thy hurt; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the report of thee clap their hands over thee; for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?”* (3:18-19).
1. The political and military leaders are slumbering in death. The line of Assyrian kings is ended. The general people are scattered and there is no returning for them.
 2. The deep wound of Babylon is incurable. No *“assuaging”* (i.e., to make less painful) of Assyria’s pain is in sight. They will certainly die!
 3. The world had felt the cruel might of Assyria at one point or another. The nations that experienced the cruel and inhumane methods of war will not mourn over her death. Assyria exiled, impaled upon poles, flayed and made walls of their cities out of the skin of their enemies. These same subjects of Assyria’s cruelty now rejoice over her fall.