

Welcome to the Book of Nahum!

We have chosen 3:19 as a key verse for Nahum as it reflects the theme of Nineveh's doom. In recent years it has been popular to caricature present prophets of doom as bearded, unkempt, shabbily dressed individuals who stand on corners with signs that read "The End is Near." It is not popular to carry the message of doom for a nation or the human race, and yet judgment upon arrogant nations and compassion for those hidden in Christ is as sure as life and death itself!

NAHUM

Nineveh's Doom

**BALANCED
SCALES**

1:3,7

1

**A RIPPLED
POND**

2:8,10

2

**BLOODY
CITY**

3:1,19

3

"There is no relief for your breakdown." 3:10

Also note the passages listed within the overview chart above. How does each passage relate to the corresponding section title? What do you think about the purpose of the book as it relates the message of Nahum? Compare the background of Jonah (the first prophet sent to Nineveh) with that of this second prophet, Nahum. The seductive deceitfulness of sin and its foothold in the human race is apparent in the lives of the Ninevites! In Jonah we learned about a reluctant prophet. In Micah we viewed the merciful prophet. In Nahum we find the doomsday prophet. The grace and mercy of God is never-ending, but one day will come to an end!

Open your heart as you read!

Is the announcement and description of what is coming motivating to you? Does your testimony of the Gospel include telling it like it is? Does God's righteous pronouncement of doom upon the nations make you angry - and do you think such action is vindicated? Though God will forgive sin repented (Jonah), He will not condone sin persisted (Nahum)! Nations may live like there is no tomorrow but God has proven through history that tomorrow will come.

KEY FACTS about the book of Nahum

When Nahum proclaimed to Nineveh “you will be hidden”, he meant what he said! After Nineveh’s destruction in 612 B.C., the city lay obliterated and undiscovered for nearly 2,500 years! Alexander the Great fought the battle of Arabia in 331 B.C. very close to the “hidden city” and had no knowledge of the city’s previous existence. Napoleon camped near its site; he, too, was not aware of it. Many scholars thought the reference to Nineveh in the Bible was only mythical. It seemed that no such city ever existed. In 1845, a man by the name of Layard discovered and uncovered the ruins of Nineveh. The ruins of the magnificent palaces of the Assyrian king and thousands of inscriptions were unearthed which gave us the Assyrians’ story - penned by the Assyrians themselves.

AUTHOR AND AUDIENCE

Nahum’s name means “consolation” or “comforter”. This book was probably written before 612 B.C. (the historical date of the overthrow of Nineveh). This event was both a comfort to Israel and a curse. It pointed to the righteous judgment of Nineveh (for her crimes) but also to the unrighteous state of the people of God themselves (for her crimes). The ultimate “comfort” is found in the fact that God is and will be vindicated - and that this is a blessing to all. The Northern Kingdom has fallen (722 B.C.) and the invasions upon Judah by Sennacherib have begun (2 Kings 18).

Over 100 years have passed since Jonah walked the streets of Nineveh proclaiming his ominous message of “turn or burn”. Now it is no longer possible to repent. God’s judgment will come upon the cruel and disobedient nation of Assyria, and nothing can stop it. Nineveh, the capital, would be destroyed “with an overflowing flood”, a prophecy which literally came true. Heavy rains caused the Tigris river to overflow its banks and destroy the city walls, allowing both the river and the Babylonian army to sweep in like a flood in 612 B.C. Nahum’s prophecy was not a call to repentance but a statement of final doom.

Why Study the book of Nahum?

Nineveh proclaims to us the final vindication of right against wrong (Revelation 6:10; Romans 12:19). All wrongs will be righted by God. Though sometimes it may appear to those who wait that God is “asleep” or “disinterested”, He has promised and proven that “vengeance is Mine”! We must learn to wait upon the Lord and not take justice into the hands of the unjust!

The walls of Nineveh were 100 feet high, and so broad that three chariots could be driven on them side by side. These walls were fortified with 1500 foot towers, each 200 feet high; and the area of the city encompassed 350 square miles with a population over a million.

Nothing and no one is invincible. We study Nahum to keep God’s perspective on thinking we can hide our sin. The person who hides his or her sin may be buried by it, like the city of Nineveh!

Are there some “hidden sins” in your life?



Nahum Chapter Chart

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Here are some questions that will help you “dig deeper” as you consider the message of the “Doomsday Prophet”!

CHAPTER ONE

What aspects of God’s character are revealed in this section? What phrase is repeated in verses 8 and 9? What made Nineveh contemptible in God’s sight? What is the significance of 1:15 and how does it contrast with the rest of the chapter?

TITLE _____ KEY VERSE _____

What about today?

Today we often emphasize the fact that our God is loving and forgiving. How does Nahum’s message relate to such a view of God? Do you personally have a problem with a God who can judge this harshly? How can such sadness for many be a cause of happiness for others (verse 15)? “Doomsday prophecy” is not popular. God has called us to announce the bad news of His judgment against sin in light of the “Good News” of Christ!

CHAPTER TWO

What will be the result of Nineveh’s judgment upon Israel? What is the irony in the “water” image in this chapter? What is being portrayed in 2:10-12? Who are the “young lions” and what is their role? What do you think that the messengers who were cut-off had been saying?

TITLE _____ KEY VERSE _____

What about today?

Here is an image of security that is amazingly and devastatingly smashed. Verse 12 reveals the spoils of idolatry which give an illusion of permanence. We must be careful not to live for today’s illusions. That which is material will simply not translate to the heavenly kingdom. Are you building your own “walls of security”? Our “beautiful pools” can wash away overnight!

CHAPTER THREE

How would you summarize Nineveh’s crimes? Note verse 7 in conjunction with Nahum’s name. How do you think Nineveh would have responded to this message? Verse 19 could be considered Nineveh’s memorial.

TITLE _____ KEY VERSE _____

What about today?

Record a list of the crimes that your nation could be charged with today. Now make a similar list for the “church.” Crimes against the Father will not go unpunished! Doom is announced, described and vindicated. Irving Jensen notes that in Nahum we find a Psalm of God’s majesty (1:1-2:2) and a Dirge of Nineveh’s destruction (2:3-3:19). And so we see both the sign of Jonah and the sequel to the story of a nation who refuses to be renewed to repentance. The sign has been given to the nations - and the sequel is imminent!

DOOMSDAY

The Scriptures teach a basic principle which has a direct application both for Nineveh as well as our own nation: "To whom much is given, much shall be required". Nineveh had been given the privilege of knowing the one true God. Under the preaching of Jonah, this capital city of the Assyrian Empire had repented, and God mercifully stayed His judgment. Now, 150 years later, Nineveh rebels rather than repenting and experiences not deliverance but destruction... "with an overrunning flood". This prophecy literally came true as the Tigris river overflowed its banks and destroyed the city walls, allowing both the river and the Babylonian hordes to sweep in like a flood.

The U.S. has been abundantly blessed by God and the same principle of "to whom much is given, much shall be required" applies. But where did Nineveh go wrong between Jonah and Nahum and what makes a Nineveh nation? The following principles are given as a forewarning for our own nation - as well as individual believers:

A. Failure to communicate spiritual lessons to offspring...Nineveh's revival was short-lived, not because the people involved were insincere in their repentance, but because apparently they failed to pass on their newfound knowledge of God to the succeeding generation.

B. Resting on spiritual laurels of the past...You will never win today's battles by dreaming of yesterday's victories; nor conquer today's temptations by falling back on yesterday's successes. The Assyrians assumed one revival was enough for any nation, and overnight they fell from prominence.

C. Pride in your own resources...So that you fail to depend on God. As long as a people are proud, they cannot know God. A proud person is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you. This was a Nineveh problem.

D. Worshipping the created more than the Creator...We have become a nation of idolaters. Our idolatry may not be as crude as the Assyrians but it is just as destructive. The shrines of material wealth, military power, personal pleasure, prestige, and popularity are crowded with worshippers.

What about today?

Proverbs 14:34 says "Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people". What other principles can you find in the following passages which determine a nation's destiny?

Psalm 33:12

2 Peter 3:9

Isaiah 60:12

Revelation 12:9

Genesis 19:13

Psalm 106:47

Matthew 24:12

Jeremiah 10:25

When Nahum proclaimed to Nineveh, "...you shall be hidden he meant what he said! After Nineveh's destruction; in 612 B.C., the site lay obliterated and undiscovered for nearly 2,500 years! It noteworthy that in the last days the prophesies of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation appear to make no mention of the United States of America.