



Overview for Nahum

Purpose: To pronounce judgment upon Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and to comfort the people of Judah with the assurance that their enemy was doomed and would no longer be a threat to their national security.

Author: Nahum the Elkoshite, a prophet

Date Written: Probably between 663 and 654 B.C. according to evidence from within the book

To Whom Written: The people of Nineveh and Judah

History: In spite of repenting at the preaching of Jonah some 100 to 150 years earlier, the people of Nineveh (the mighty capital of the Assyrian Empire) had turned back to their evil ways, and had once again rejected God and were unrepentant. Under the leadership of Sennacherib, the armies of Assyria had invaded Judah and laid siege against Jerusalem, which was only delivered by an act of divine intervention. Then the prophet Nahum stepped on the scene to pronounce God's judgment and impending doom upon this wicked nation.

Setting: The fact that Nahum is identified as the "Elkoshite" in the first verse of the book suggests that he was from a place called Elkosh, though its location is unknown. Some Bible scholars identify it with Capernaum (literally, the "village of Nahum"). Thus, it is possible that Nahum was born in Galilee, but moved to Judah during Israel's defection. Other scholars propose a location in Mesopotamia, and suggest that Nahum may have been a descendant of Israelite captives. The fact that Nahum was so familiar with the city of Nineveh lends support to this view.

Assyria was the most powerful nation on earth, and was renowned for its plunder, slaughter, and vicious treatment of the people it conquered. Under Sennacherib, the city of Nineveh was reestablished

as the nation's capital. Surrounded by walls so thick that three chariots could travel abreast along the top, the city was considered impregnable. Inside the city walls were beautiful buildings, roads, and gardens.

Characteristics: The lyrical, poetic style of the book is deemed by scholars to be of the highest quality, an example of Hebrew literature at its best. Superb word pictures, and the author's rhetorical skill in his vivid portrayal of the attack, destruction, and plundering of the city has caused this short book to be called the most poetic of all the prophetic writings. It is also the most severe in tone of any of the minor prophets, with the only glimpses of brightness at the beginning of the prophecy (Nahum 1:7, 15) rather than at the end.

Summary: Chapter 1 announces the doom of Nineveh, and establishes the nature of the Judge who is the Divine Agent of its coming destruction. Verses 9-14 deliver a message from the Judge to Nineveh, mentioning specific instances of their futile rebellion against Jehovah. The closing verse of the chapter is a message of comfort for Judah.

In chapter 2, the author described Nineveh's fall in vivid detail, concluding with the prophet's wonderment at the destruction of such a powerful city, and the pronouncement of Jehovah against the evil and rebellious city.

Chapter 3 provides a vindication for Nineveh's destruction, giving three reasons for the judgment: 1) Nineveh's bloody history; 2) her similarity to wicked Egypt and particularly to the city of No (or Thebes); and 3) her apathy. The book closes with the pronouncement that no one could or would come to Nineveh's aid, and the nations who had suffered at Assyria's hands would rejoice over the report of her suffering.

Timeline

See “The Divided Kingdom” four-page timeline included in this unit.

Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

- I. Nineveh's fall announced (1:1-15)
 - A. The messenger of the Judge (1:1)
 - B. The majesty of the Judge (1:2-8)
 - C. The message of the Judge (1:9-14)
 - D. The message to Judah (1:15)
- II. Nineveh's fall described (2:1-13)
 - A. The declaration of warning (2:1-2)
 - B. The description of the invasion (2:3-5)
 - C. The doom of the city (2:6-10)
 - D. The destruction of the city (2:11-13)
- III. Nineveh's fall vindicated (3:1-19)
 - A. The defense of the city (3:1-3)
 - B. The condition of the city (3:4-7)
 - C. The certain doom of the city (3:8-19)