

BIBLE SURVEY - NAHUM

"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him" Nahum 1:7.

About 150 years after Jonah had been sent to Nineveh, Nahum delivered *"a burden against Nineveh"* (about 660 B.C.). In the Book of Jonah we see that God controls the forces of **nature** (the storm, the whale and the worm). In the Book of Nahum, we see that God controls the forces of **history** (the rise and fall of nations).

Understand the Times

This often neglected and disparaged Book of Nahum provides us with a vital key for understanding past, present and future history. Events do not occur as random happenings. Every particular aspect and direction of history is determined by the will, purpose and power of God. **Everything has consequences.**

God is Sovereign

The Lord, the incomparable and all-powerful Creator God, is the Eternal Judge. He holds universal dominion over every state and nation. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. As a holy, covenant keeping God, He deserves, desires and demands undivided loyalty and complete obedience from everyone, everywhere, at all times. Rejection of Almighty God and violation of His Laws inevitably lead not only to serious consequences in society and nature, but inevitably evoke His wrath and judgment.

Atonement is Essential

God's patience must never be misunderstood as weakness. Sin cannot be left unpunished. Neither personal sin, or national sin, will be left unpunished. ***"The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked"*** Nahum 1:3. Justice must be done. Atonement for sin is essential.

Who is Nahum?

Nahum is described as an Elokoshite. He was from the Ten Northern Tribes of Israel, which had been defeated and deported into exile by the Assyrian king Shalmaneser. As the descendant of refugees who had fled the Northern Kingdom of Israel and settled in Galilee, Nahum grew up in the same area that Jonah had come from. The town of Capernaum means *"the village of Nahum."* It could be that because of the fame of the prophet Nahum, this town was later named after him. Nahum never returned from his mission to Nineveh. His tomb can still be found on the West Bank of the Tigris River today. The name Nahum means *comfort*, or consolation. Nahum is a short form of Nehemiah (*comfort of Yahweh*).

When Was Nahum Written?

As the Book alludes to the conquest of Thebes (663 B.C.), we know that it was written after that time. We also know that it was written long before the Fall of Nineveh, which occurred in 612 B.C. The most likely date of the prophecy is between 660 - 650 B.C., in the days of King Manasseh of Judah.

The Deliverance of Jerusalem

During the reign of King Hezekiah, the king of Assyria, Sennacherib came and besieged Jerusalem. The city was delivered when an Angel of the Lord killed 185,000 of the Assyrian army surrounding them. Nahum had been alive at the time and would have witnessed the siege of Jerusalem and its miraculous deliverance (as recorded in 2 Kings 19). ***"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" Nahum 1:2.

The Greatest City of the Ancient World

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, which had destroyed Israel. Nineveh was founded by Nimrod, shortly after the Flood. 300 miles North of Babylon, Nineveh rose to world power by 900 B.C. The Assyrian Empire was mighty and brutal, feeding on the blood of the nations (Nahum 2:11-13). The great city of Nineveh was about 30 miles long and 10 miles wide. It was protected by 5 walls and 3 moats, built by the forced labour of countless foreign captives and slaves. Built at the junction of the Tigris and Khoser Rivers, it was protected by walls 100 feet high and broad enough on top to have four chariots drive abreast the 8 miles circuit defending the inner city fortress.

The Destruction of Nineveh

About 40 years after Nahum's prophecy, the Babylonians and Medes rose up against the Assyrians and besieged Nineveh. After 2 years of intense siege, a sudden flooding of the river washed away part of the defensive walls and everything came to pass exactly as Nahum had pictured: *"The gates of the rivers are opened and the palace is dissolved..."*, *"the prancing horses, the cracking whips, the rattling wheels of chariots, the flashing swords, great heaps of dead bodies"*, it all come to pass exactly as the prophet Nahum had described in such vivid and shocking detail. ***"...The gates of your land are wide open for your enemies; fire shall devour the bars of your gates"*** Nahum 3:13.

God Dug Nineveh's Grave

It is a terrifying thing to have Almighty God declare: ***"Behold I am against you"*** Nahum 3:5. ***"I will dig your grave, for you are vile"*** Nahum 1:14. The destruction of Nineveh was so complete that even its site was forgotten. When Alexander the Great fought the famous Battle of Arbela (331 B.C.), near the site of Nineveh, he did not even know that there had been a city there 300 years before. So completely had all traces of the glory of the Assyrian Empire disappeared that many scholars came to wonder if the references to it in the Bible, and other ancient histories, were mythical.

The Excavations of Nineveh

In 1820, the English archaeologist, Claude James Rich, excavated the ruins of Nineveh. In 1845, Layard uncovered the ruins of the magnificent palaces of Sennacherib and Assurbanipal. Other archaeological discoveries were made by Rassam and Rawlingson (1852-1854), uncovering the famous library of Assurbanipal, with its 100,000 volumes. Much of these treasures are now in the British Museum. These extensive archaeological findings and remarkable manuscripts confirm the prophecies in the Bible.

Superpower Doomed to Destruction

When Nahum gave his shocking prophecy of impending destruction, Assyria was at the height of her power. Her borders extended all the way to Egypt. Nahum shows what God can do with a wicked, cruel and merciless people. God will utterly destroy the wicked.

Pride Comes Before a Fall

The response of the people of Nineveh to the message of Jonah, their repentance, spared their city for generations. However, now the Assyrians had returned to idolatry, violence and arrogance. God raised up the Babylonians, with their red uniforms and red shields, to destroy Assyria at the zenith of her power. The moat surrounding Nineveh, 100 feet wide and 60 feet deep, could not keep out the flood of destruction as the peoples who had been looted and oppressed by the Assyrians exacted a fearful revenge. The wealthiest and most splendid city in the world at that

time was looted and burned and fell into ruin and rubble, buried in time under shifting sands of the expanding desert.

Judge and Father

The Book of Nahum reveals the justice of God. He must avenge all crime. In Nahum, chapter 1, we see that God is the Eternal **Judge** and He is a loving and compassionate **Father**. God's acts of Judgment are both **retributive** and **redemptive**. He destroys His enemies, but He redeems His people. As a Judge, God is jealous, vengeful, furious, full of wrath, great in power, He will not acquit the wicked, He is indignant at sin (Nahum 1:6). However, as a compassionate Father, God is slow to anger, good, a stronghold in the day of trouble and He knows those who trust Him (Nahum 1:3,7). Do you trust in God?

The Day of the Lord

There is a Day coming when the whole world will face God's wrath. The Book of Revelation speaks of a Day when people would rather be swallowed up in an earthquake, then face the justice of God. They will be calling for the mountains to fall upon them, to cover them from the wrath of God. Nahum reveals that God allots every nation its place, in time and space. Nations are allowed to rise. It is God who allows rulers to rise up and it is He who will bring them down. Those who make themselves the enemies of God will be destroyed by Him. Divine intervention will always mean **disaster** for the enemies of God, but **deliverance** for His faithful servants.

God is Jealous

God is described as a jealous God. **"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"** Nahum 1:2. God is a jealous God. He is not envious. Envy is wanting something that belongs to someone else. Jealousy is wanting what is rightfully your own. You may be envious about somebody else's wife. That would be sin. But it would not be sinful to be jealous for your own wife. So God is jealous for His Name, His people, and His Creation. God will destroy those who destroy His creatures and His people.

The Structure of Nahum

Chapter 1, deals with **Who?** The Character of God. **Immortal, Infinite and Invincible.**

Chapter 2, describes **How** will Nineveh be destroyed? **Invasion.**

Chapter 3, describes **Why** will Nineveh be judged? **Immorality and Idolatry.**

Nineveh Will Fall

The first chapter of Nahum is an acrostic poem, where each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 1 proclaims that Nineveh **will** fall, because God is holy, just, all-seeing and all-knowing.

Nineveh Will Be Invaded

Chapter 2 describes **how** it will fall. A lion was the national emblem of Assyria. Yet God is The Lion and no one can resist His power.

Nineveh is Evil

Chapter 3 of Nahum explains **why** Nineveh will be destroyed: corruption, theft, looting, bribery, cruelty, immorality, idolatry and sorcery. **"Woe to the bloody city! It is full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs... Because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, the mistress of sorceries, who sells nations through her harlotries, and families through her sorceries. Behold, 'I am against you', says the Lord of hosts"** Nahum 3:1-5.

The Victims of Nineveh Will Rejoice

Nineveh was an arrogant, wicked, deceitful power, unscrupulous in its lust for loot. Devious and demonic in its betrayal of nations, indulgence in immorality and occultism. ***"Your injury has no healing, your wound is severe. All who hear news of you will clap their hands over you, for upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?"*** Nahum 3:19. Be kind to people on your way up, you will meet the same people on the way down! What you sow is what you will reap.

We Are Answerable to God

We live in a moral universe, controlled by a God who will ultimately put all wrongs right. God sees everything. No crime can go unpunished. God is not short-sighted. He cannot overlook sin. He does not condone evil. Pride will always lead to a fall. We are all answerable to God for the way that we treat His creatures and one another. No one can escape accountability to our Creator and Eternal Judge. It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the Judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

God Will Put All Things Right

God's people are not immune from trouble and tribulation. Yes, God's people suffer injustice, persecution and tribulation. But the Day will come when God will put all things right. The Kingdom is the Lord's and every people, in every nation, owe allegiance to the King of kings and Lord of lords. He knows those who are His (Nahum 1:7). Do you know God? Does He know you? Jesus said that His sheep now His voice and they follow Him. Jesus said those who love Him, obey His Commandments.

God is Holy

The holiness of God requires Him to deal with sin in Judgment. Romans 3:23-26 declares: *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a Propitiation by His Blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be Just and the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."*

The Necessity for the Cross

In the Book of the vision of Nahum, we can see the necessity of the Cross of Christ because God is a jealous and avenging God. He must punish sin. Justice must be satisfied. God has, in Christ, taken upon Himself, the sins of His people, and fully paid our debts through His Blood. Those who surrender to Christ can have their sins washed away. Those who reject Christ and continue in their rebellion to Almighty God will face God's wrath on the Day of Judgment. Any person, or nation, that deliberately, and persistently, rejects God and violates His Laws can be sure of His condemnation.

God Will Destroy His Enemies

God is the sure Destroyer of His enemies and the sure Protector of His people. Assyria had lied, plundered, stolen and betrayed. Her idols could not save her. Nineveh will be ashamed and despised. *"I will cast abominable filth upon you, make you vile, and make you a spectacle."* Nahum 3:6. **Nineveh is a type of all nations that turn their backs on God.** In arrogance, many nations depend upon their own economic, or military, power, but they forget that it is ***"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord of hosts"*** Zechariah 4:6.

The Day of the Lord Will Come

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be

dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be, in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" 2 Peter 3:9-13.

Capernaum

Capernaum (the village of Nahum) had the privilege of the Lord, Himself, teaching and healing in their streets and homes. However, the Lord Jesus said that it would be better on the Day of Judgment for those from Sodom and Gomorrah, than for Capernaum. To whom much is given, much is required. To whom much more is given, much more is required. Capernaum rejected the Lord and so, like Nineveh, Capernaum also lies in ruins.

Nineveh Will Rebuke Us

Jesus rebuked the people of Judah, saying that the men of Nineveh will rise up in the Judgment and condemn them because Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed Jesus is greater than Jonah. ***"The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it"*** Matthew 12:41.

"What do you conspire against the Lord? He will make an utter end of it..." Nahum 1:9. Those who conspire against the Lord will inevitably fail. The New World Order, like every empire before, will ultimately fail and the Day will come when every knee will bow before Christ (Psalm 2).

Good Tidings

"Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace!..." Nahum 1:15. Luke 1:19 alludes to these good tidings and Romans 10:14-15 quotes from this passage in Nahum: ***"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!'"***

Dr. Peter Hammond
Livingstone Fellowship
P.O. Box 74 Newlands 7725
Cape Town South Africa
Tel: 021-689-4480
Email: mission@frontline.org.za
Website: www.livingstonefellowship.co.za



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