

# Nahum, God's Uncomfortable Prophet

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## Introduction:

### A. Background - Nahum 1:1-8

1. Nahum the prophet and his book may be the least read and understood of all of the Old Testament books, perhaps because his background is nearly unknown and his book is not directly quoted by any New Testament writer. The only mention of Nahum in the Bible is in his book.
  - a. However, he reveals a Divine explanation for what human beings consider contradictory characteristics of Deity. He explains the goodness and severity of God
2. Nahum was a minor prophet whose book comes in chronological order between Micah and Habakkuk in the Bible. He wrote about the end of the Assyrian Empire and its capital city, Nineveh, in a vivid poetic style.
3. Little is known about Nahum's personal history. His name means "comforter," and is a shortened form of the name Nehemiah ("Comfort of Yahweh"); he was from the town of Alqosh, (Elkosh - Nahum 1:1)
  - a. It may be modern Alqosh of Assyria in northern Iraq, or Capernaum of northern Galilee. I think it is the first
4. Like Jonah, he was a very patriotic, nationalistic Hebrew; however, he managed to live amongst the Elkoshites in peace, to the extent that although he was a Hebrew, he was identified as an Elkoshite
5. His book is a prophecy written in about 615 BC, just before the downfall of Assyria, because the capitol city of Nineveh did not remain faithful to their repentance in the days of Jonah
6. "No one of the minor Prophets seems to equal the sublimity, the vehemence and the boldness of Nahum: besides, his Prophecy is a complete and finished poem; his exordium is magnificent, and indeed majestic; the preparation for the destruction of Nineveh, and the description of its ruin, and its greatness, are expressed in most vivid colors, and possess admirable perspicuity and fullness." (John Owen, translator, Calvin's Commentary on Nahum)

### B. The end of Nineveh and Assyria

1. Nineveh was destroyed by fire in 612 BC, and the Assyrian empire came to an end, an event which changed all of Asia.
2. Archaeological digs have uncovered the splendor of Nineveh in its zenith under Sennacherib (705–681 BC), Esarhaddon (681–669 BC), and Ashurbanipal (669–633 BC). Massive walls were eight miles in circumference. It had a water aqueduct, palaces and a library with 20,000 clay tablets, including accounts of a creation in Enuma Elish and a flood in the Epic of Gilgamesh.
3. King Josiah of Judah destroyed what was left of Nineveh and the Assyrian empire in 609 BC.

### C. Nahum's message

1. Chapter one shows the majesty and might of God the LORD in goodness and severity. Paul uses Nahum's principles in Romans 11:22.

2. The prophet Jonah shows God love and mercy for the people of Nineveh, while Nahum's writing testifies to the righteousness and justice of God.
3. Nahum shows God to be slow to anger, but that God will by no means ignore the guilty; God will bring his vengeance and wrath to pass. God is presented as a God who will punish evil, but will protect those who trust in Him - Nahum 1:2-3, 7
4. God's judgment on Nineveh - Nahum 3:4
5. Chapters two and three describe the fall of Nineveh, which later took place in 612 BC. Ironically, Nineveh is compared to Thebes, the Egyptian city that Assyria itself had destroyed in 663 BC. Nahum describes the siege and frenzied activity of Nineveh's troops as they try in vain to halt the invaders. He becomes a participant in the battle, and with irony, shouts battle commands to the defenders. Nineveh is sarcastically compared to a lion, which is the Assyrian symbol of power; Nineveh is the lion of strength that has a den full of dead prey, but will become weak like the lion hiding in its den. It comes to conclusion with a taunting song and funeral dirge of the impending destruction of Nineveh and the demise of the great Assyrian conquerors and rulers.
6. Nahum's prophecy was echoed by Zephaniah, who also predicted the destruction of the city - Zeph. 2:4-15
7. The tomb of Nahum is inside the synagogue at Alqosh, abandoned by the Jewish population in 1948, when they were expelled by the Iraqi state, and the synagogue that houses the tomb is cared for by an Iraqi who promised to maintain it. In 2008, Americans sent money to make repairs, but the site may be destroyed by ISIS.

## **I. THE POWER OF MEN WILL NOT SAVE**

- A. Nineveh was one of the mightiest cities on earth
  1. Greater Nineveh was 30 miles long and 10 miles wide. Nineveh, the inner city, was 3 miles long and 1.5 miles wide.
  2. Its walls were 100 feet high and wide enough to drive three chariots abreast. There were 5 wall systems; the innermost wall was 8 miles around. There were towers spaced along the wall which were 100 feet higher than the walls themselves. There were three moats around the city, 150 feet wide and 60 feet deep. It was estimated that it could withstand a 20 year siege
  3. The palace covered 100 acres and was 90 feet high. Sennacherib's palace alone would cover three large city blocks.
- B. It wasn't enough. Babylon came and laid siege to the city for two years
  1. Nahum 1:8, 2:6 - Nineveh's end would come with a flood. The Tigris River flooded in 612 BC, destroying a large section of Nineveh's wall. The Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar, invaded the city through that breach, plundered it and burnt it.
    - a. Nahum 2:9 - The city looted
    - b. Nahum 3:13-15 - City burnt, gates destroyed

- c. Nahum 3:12 - The surrounding fortresses would easily fall
- d. Nahum 3:17 - The leaders would flee
- e. Nahum 1:14; 2:11 - City would not be rebuilt
- f. Nahum 3:11 - Nineveh would be hidden. After its destruction, the city was not rebuilt. It wasn't until AD 1842 that its ruins were found. Nahum's prophecy is verified by archeology.

## **II. GOD HAS ALL POWER**

- A. He is slow to anger, but it does not mean He is weak - Nahum 1:3
  - 1. God will destroy Nineveh and there isn't a thing they can do to stop it  
Nahum 1:9
  - 2. Assyria will be destroyed for her aggression and corrupting influence -  
Nahum 3:1-7
  - 3. Assyria is not too big for God to bring down - Nahum 3:9, 12, 14-15

## **III. LESSONS FROM NAHUM**

- A. God is patient, but it doesn't imply He is unable to act - 2Peter 3:3-4, 9
- B. No nation is too big to fall; this world is not too great to destroy - Zeph. 2:13-15
  - 1. Psalm 115:3; 2Chron. 20:6; Zech. 4:6; Isa. 40:23
- C. Don't become confident in your condition - Prov. 16:5; 1Cor. 10:12

Conclusion:

- A. Neh. 9:5-13