

Nahum Chapter 1

Nahum, who penned this book, was a relative unknown.

He was from Elkosh in Judah.

The name "Nahum" means full of comfort.

Nahum prophesied about the time of Jeremiah.

Most scholars believe Nahum's prophecy began about 620 B.C.

His message is that Nineveh will fall.

Soon after Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, they fell back into their old sinful ways.

Nahum 1:1 "The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite."

The prophecy is a message of doom.

Nahum was only the messenger of this divine oracle of judgment on Nineveh.

"Nineveh" was the Assyrian capital situated on the Tigris River.

It fell to Babylon (in 612 B.C.; see note on Jonah 1:1-3).

We immediately see that this message for Nineveh came to Nahum by a vision from God.

Verses 2-15

The destruction of Nineveh was announced.

Nahum 1:2 "God [is] jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and [is] furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth [wrath] for his enemies."

"Jealous":

This attribute, often used of God's burning zeal for His wife, Israel, emphasizes His passionate reaction against anyone guilty of spiritual adultery.

Possibly the captivity of the 10 northern tribes (722 B.C.), or the invasion of Sennacherib (701 B.C.) is in view here.

(Hebrew “qano”, meaning “zealous,” or “jealous”).

Nahum is not ascribing human imperfection to God.

Rather, the thought is that God is the One who embodies a burning zeal for righteousness and justice.

He quickly arises to the defense of His own, and executes judgment on those who are not His own or who hurt those who are.

This one verse should be a great consolation to those who belong to God.

He chastises His children, but the wrath of God is reserved for those who have totally rejected God.

In the following Scripture, we see just how jealous God is.

Exodus 20:5 "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God [am] a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth [generation] of them that hate me;"

Exodus 34:14 " For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name [is] Jealous, [is] a jealous God:"

God has repeated, over and over throughout the Bible, that vengeance is His.

Romans 12:19 "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but [rather] give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance [is] mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

Nahum 1:3 "The LORD [is] slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit [the wicked]: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds [are] the dust of his feet."

“Slow to anger”:

The jealousy (of verse 2), should not suggest that God is quick to anger; rather He is longsuffering (Exodus 34:6; Num. 14:18).

God had extended His forbearance to Nineveh at least a century earlier in response to their repentance at Jonah’s preaching (Jonah 3:10; 4:2).

But although patient, His justice will eventually punish the wicked.

“Whirlwind ... storm ... clouds”:

These figures frequently describe the LORD's appearances (theophanies), often in judgment (Exodus 19:9, 16; Psalm 83:15; Isa. 29:6; Joel 2:2; 1 Thess. 4:13).

Nature is the theater in which His power and majesty is showcased.

God gives ample time to repent to everyone He is dealing with.

We know He sent Jonah to warn Nineveh of their evil.

Their repentance did not last, and they went right back into their evil lifestyle.

God controls all the elements of nature.

He brings the earthquake, and the tornados, and hurricanes.

God uses natural disasters to bring people to repentance.

God will not always overlook the gross sins of the people.

He will judge those who have totally rejected Him and His ways, and send His wrath upon them.

I fear for our own country that has turned from their God.

Nahum 1:4 "He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth."

His mighty power is revealed when He rebukes the sea, as in the crossing of the Red sea (Exodus 14:15-25), and when He withholds His rain from the fertile valleys and coastal highlands.

"Bashan ... Carmel", and "Lebanon":

These were all fertile, hilly areas.

Bashan is in the Golan Heights.

Mount Carmel is a long range between the valley of Jezreel and the Mediterranean sea.

Lebanon is the forested region north of Israel's border.

These areas are pictured by the prophet as being devastated by the coming of God in judgment.

Bashan, located below Mt. Hermon, east of the Jordan was known for her lush pastures (See Micah 7:14).

Carmel, along the coast of Canaan, became synonymous with fruitfulness (S.O.S. 7:5).

Lebanon was renowned for her beautiful cedars (1 Kings 5:14-18).

Yet, they too would wither before the infinite strength of the omnipotent Judge.

Just as God caused the Red sea to part for Moses and the people of Israel, God can do with the sea as He wishes.

Without water the flowers and trees, they were famous for, would dry up and die.

God brings the flood, and He also, brings the drought.

When God cuts off the water supply, plant life dies.

Verses 5-8

“The LORD” is pictured pouring out judgment “like fire.

The mountains quake” ... “and the earth is burned at his presence.”

Yet, He is a “stronghold in the day of trouble” to all those who “trust in him.”

Like all the prophets, Nahum predicts both judgment and hope conditioned on man’s response to God.

Nahum 1:5 "The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein."

The violent shaking of the earth provides another evidence of the LORD’s awesome power, as even that which seems to be most stable quakes and trembles.

I could show many Scriptures which leave no doubt that God is in control of all the elements in the earth.

He is omnipotent, all powerful.

The following is just one.

Exodus 19:18 "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."

God rained fire and brimstone down on Sodom and Gomorrah, and they were burned up.

Verse 5 above, speaks of earthquakes, volcano eruptions, and fire that falls from the heavens.

All of this is speaking of the wrath of God on a sinful nation.

Nahum 1:6 "Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."

This series of rhetorical questions summarizes verses 2-5; His power and resolve to spew His wrath on Nineveh is irresistible, melting all opposition before it.

The answer is no one.

Assyria, or any other country that turns their back on God, can be destroyed by Him instantly.

During the wrath of God upon the whole earth in the last 3 1/2 years of the great tribulation, just the type of things we have been reading here, do happen.

The following is just a sample.

Revelation 16:1 "And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth."

Revelation 16:8 "And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire."

Nahum 1:7 "The LORD [is] good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him."

In contrast (to verse 6), Nahum eased the fury by adding that God was compassionate, a stronghold or fortress (see Psalm 46:1), to those who put their hope in Him (see Isaiah 33:2-4; 37:3-7, 29-38).

The verse foreshadowed the vindication of Judah (in verses 12b, 13, 15; 2:2).

Just as God's fury is poured out upon those who turn against God, His protection is on those who love Him.

Romans 11:22 "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in [his] goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

Nahum 1:8 "But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies."

"Flood ... darkness":

Nahum described Nineveh's judgment metaphorically as an engulfing flood and darkness from which none can escape.

Nahum said Nineveh would end “with an overflowing flood” and it happened when the Tigris River overflowed to destroy enough of the walls to let the Babylonians through.

Darkness is the result of the absence of light.

God is Light.

When there is no light, it means that they are totally evil.

Verses 9-15:

Having established God’s power and sovereign right to judge generally, Nahum announced specifically God’s judgment upon Nineveh, interweaving expressions of blessing and hope for Israel within the oracles of doom upon the wicked nation.

The sovereign Judge not only punishes (verses 9-12a; 14), but also saves (verses 12b, 13, 15).

Nahum 1:9 "What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time."

The prophet predicts the “utter end” of Nineveh.

His prediction was fulfilled (in 612 B.C.), when the city was destroyed by the Babylonians.

It was never rebuilt and has remained a desolate ruin to this day.

“What do ye imagine against the LORD”:

All Assyrian attempts to foil God’s judgment would end in futility (Psalm 2).

Their affliction of His people would not be allowed to occur again (verse 12).

Their end was determined.

The Assyrians have no way out of this.

They have come against God and His people.

Their destruction will be absolute.

It will not be necessary for a second affliction, because the first one is so complete.

Exodus 15:7 "And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, [which] consumed them as stubble."

Job 21:30 "That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath."

Nahum 1:10 "For while [they be] folden together [as] thorns, and while they are drunken [as] drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry."

"For while they be folden together as thorns":

Like them, useless and unprofitable, harmful and pernicious, fit only for burning, and being bundled together, are prepared for it.

Which is not only expressive of the bad qualities of the Ninevites, and of the danger they were in, and what they deserved; but of the certainty of their ruin.

No more being able to save themselves from it, than a bundle of thorns from the devouring fire.

"And while they are drunken as drunkards":

Dead drunk, no more able to help themselves than a drunken man that is fallen.

Or who were as easily thrown down as a drunken man is with the least touch.

Though there is no need to have recourse to a figurative sense, since the Ninevites were actually drunk when they were attacked by their enemy.

As the historian relates that the king of Assyria being elated with his fortune, and thinking himself secure, feasted his army, and gave them large quantities of wine.

And while the whole army were indulging themselves, the enemy, having notice of their negligence and drunkenness by deserters, fell upon them unawares in the night.

When disordered and unprepared, and made a great slaughter among them, and forced the rest into the city, and in a little time took it.

"They shall be devoured as stubble fully dry":

As easily, and as inevitably and irrecoverably.

They are living in such sin, that they are drunk and do not know danger is on its way.

This speaks of a society that is utterly evil.

Nahum 1:11 "There is [one] come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor."

“A wicked counsellor” who will come forth from Assyria may refer to Sennacherib who ruled (from 705 to 681 B.C.), and invaded Judah (in 701 B.C.).

“Wicked counsellor”:

The phrase, literally “counselor of Belial,” suggests Satanic influence on the leadership, identified as the king of Assyria (3:18).

Specific reference could be made to Ashurbanipal (669-663 B.C.), but more likely to Sennacherib and of whom Isaiah speaks in similar language (Isa. 10:7).

This speaks of Sennacherib as a person, and Nineveh as a city that are totally against God and His people.

This speaks of both.

Even their thoughts were opposed to God.

Nahum 1:12 "Thus saith the LORD; Though [they be] quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more."

“Thus saith the LORD”:

Used as a common prophetic formula introducing God’s unequivocal message, it occurs only here in the book. (Verse 12a), is related in the third person, denoting the enemy, while (in verse 12b), the chosen people of God are spoken of in the second person.

The safety of a walled city and massive numbers (“many”), would not be a sufficient defense.

“Even so” harkens back (to verses 7-10).

“Quite, and likewise many” is an Assyrian phrase implying unity.

The idiom means that they are so united that they make the noise of only one person.

They had no compassion toward God's people, and now, God has no compassion toward them.

"Thus saith the LORD" is stating the certainty of the destruction against Nineveh and Assyria, and the promise of restoration to God's people.

The chastisement of God's people is over, and God's wrath is turned upon Nineveh.

Nahum 1:13 "For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder."

“I will afflict thee no more” (refers back to 12b).

Judah was to be no longer afflicted by Assyria.

The "yoke" is speaking of the bondage in Assyria.

God will free His people, and bring His wrath upon their enemies.

It is God that releases His people, just as it was God who punished them with captivity.

God has forgiven His family, and will restore them.

Nahum 1:14 "And the LORD hath given a 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."

Three judgments were pronounced.

First, the king of Assyria, representing the nation, would become destitute of descendants.

Second, the gods by which they received their authority would be destroyed.

Third, the king would be put to death (the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C.).

This verse is directed at the Assyrians, who worship false gods altogether.

They have no regard for the True God.

They will not be known as a great nation anymore.

This is their complete fall.

The Assyrians will be no more.

God destroys all of their false gods, as well.

God has judged them, and they are very evil.

Sennacherib died with his idols, so perhaps, that is inferred here, as well.

They are all doomed to hell.

Nahum 1:15 "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off."

“Mountains ... feet”:

The verse echoes (Isaiah 52:7), where it refers to those who announced the deliverance from Babylon.

The theme of good tidings and peace reverberates throughout the message of the New Testament (Luke 2:10; Isaiah 61:1 with Luke 4:16-21; Romans 10:15; Ephesians 2:14-18).

“Feasts”:

During a siege, people were prevented from going up to Jerusalem to celebrate her annual feast (Num. Chapters 28 and 29).

With the destruction of Assyria, Judah was called upon to celebrate her feasts and to pay the vows made while under siege (Psalm 116:14, 17-18).

The destruction of their worst enemy would be good news to Judah.

Assyria will no longer run through their country at will.

Notice, there are instructions for them to continue worshipping the One True God.

They must not forget God, or they will wind up like the Assyrians.

Isaiah 52:1 "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean."

God takes care of His own.

He does expect the love and loyalty of His own.

Judah had not been able to keep the feasts, while there was captivity, but now that God has restored her, she must go back to worship of the One True God.

Nahum Chapter 1 Questions

1. What does the name "Nahum" mean?
2. When is it believed he began prophesying?
3. What happened to Nineveh, soon after they repented at Jonah's preaching?
4. How did Nahum receive this message?

5. Who does God take vengeance on?
6. Who does He reserve His wrath for?
7. What is one of God's names that we read in Exodus chapter 34 verse 14?
8. Vengeance is _____; I will repay, saith the Lord.
9. _____ controls all the elements of nature.
10. God gives ample time to _____.
11. Why does God bring natural disasters?
12. When was one time God showed His power over the sea?
13. When God cuts off the water supply, _____ dies.
14. What is an example of God destroying by fire and brimstone?
15. What types of natural disasters are spoken of in verse 5?
16. Who can stand before His indignation?
17. How many years will the wrath of God be on the earth during the great tribulation?
18. Who pours out wrath upon the earth?
19. Those who trust God can expect Him to be their _____ in time of trouble.
20. Why is the destruction of Nineveh compared to a flood?
21. The Assyrian's destruction will be _____.
22. What is darkness?
23. What type of society does verse 10 speak of?
24. Who is verse 11 speaking of?
25. What is the "yoke" speaking of?
26. God expects the _____ and _____ of His own.
27. Why had they abandoned the feast days?