

NAHUM

Justice for God's Enemies

Comfort & Deliverance for His People

A Lesson for Us All



by Robert Curry

Which book of the Bible do you know the least about?

Probably one of the 12 Minor Prophets, and most likely the book of Nahum. I doubt if you've ever heard a scripture from it, or a sermon or discussion about it.

The Bible teaches that we must live "by every word" of God (Matthew 4:4) because "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It sounds like we'd better get to know this little-known book better!

Being a Minor Prophet doesn't have anything to do with lowering the third! They are minor in size not message, and the message is for all of us today!

A literary masterpiece

Nahum may be only three chapters and 48 verses but its style is "lyric poetry of a high order, which some have considered the most impassioned in all the prophets"--*The Scofield Study Bible III. The New International Version Archaeological Study Bible* (NIV ASB) praises its "rich vocabulary and the intense moods he attempted to evoke; his masterful use of simile and metaphor; his vivid word pictures; his effective use of repetition; his penchant for short, staccato phrases (see e.g., 3:1-3); and his frequent rhetorical questions."

Nahum has been called the Poet Laureate of the Minor Prophets for his complete and finished poem, especially when read in Hebrew.

Scofield concludes “All must concede that his messages are vivid and forceful.” And they contain powerful lessons for us today.

Yes, the book of Nahum is not ho-hum!

The coming fall of Nineveh and Assyria

Nahum prophesies about the coming destruction of Nineveh, capital of the Assyrian Empire, in 612 B.C. by Babylon (led by Nabopolassar), allied with Medes (led by Cyaxares) and Scythians, as described in the Babylonian Chronicles.

Most would say, so what? Boring ancient history! Why should I care? How is that relevant to me?

Most of us never were taught much about ancient Assyria. In today’s cancel culture, most are not being taught any history! The Bible nails the underlying reason: “they will see in our history the faithful love of the LORD” (Psalm 107:43). Today’s culture blares it incorrectly but we do actually need to wake up!

What if we’re talking about the coming destruction of modern nations and their capitals? Yours?

Nahum is a powerful message for any nation or individual who wants to stand in God’s graces. God values justice and deliverance.

What Do we know about Nahum besides being a poet?

Nahum means “comfort” and is related to the name Nehemiah, one of the Bible’s outstanding leaders.

The key verse of this book (Nahum 1:7) is comforting for anybody who complies with it: “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.”

Nahum, contemporary with the prophets Hosea and Isaiah, wrote sometime between the fall of the Egyptian city of Thebes (No Amon) in 663 B.C., which was mentioned as a past event (Nahum 3:8), and the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C., yet future.

Little is known about Nahum

The *NIV ASB* makes him sound like a real nobody: “We know nothing of the author of the book ... other than that he came from Elkosh, a village of unknown location.”

The prophet is called an Elkoshite (Nahum 1:1). *Halley’s Bible Handbook* says, “There is said to have been an Elkosh on the Tigris, 20 miles north of Nineveh, and that Nahum may have been among the Israelite captives.” Perhaps Nahum may have had opportunity to witness to Nineveh itself of its coming destruction, though nothing in the Bible or history says that he did.

From there he might have come to the northern part of Israel

where Israelites known as Scythians reoccupied for a decade or so before Assyria's fall. It's interesting that Capernaum, located on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, is modern Kfar Nahum which means "village of Nahum." The third- and fourth-century A.D. theologian Jerome stated that he had been shown a town named Elkosh in Galilee. *The Nelson Study Bible* (NSB) believes Nahum may have been written "under the reform of Josiah in 622 B.C.

How ironic that the prophet who writes of Nineveh's destruction may have been an Israelite they earlier took captive.

Nahum wrote to Judah to comfort them with news of Nineveh's coming destruction, and the Jews preserved his book.

The sequel to Jonah

Nahum has been called the sequel to the preaching of Jonah about 150 years earlier when God spared Nineveh because the whole city—even the animals—fasted for God’s mercy. They put sackcloth on their cows!

Jonah ran from preaching to Nineveh because he was afraid they would repent and then he knew God would spare them, resulting in this ruthless nation tormenting his people once again.

God did delay their punishment. And as usual with mankind, the repentance didn’t last very long. Ancient Assyria took the northern 10 Tribes of Israel into captivity in 722 B.C. How ironic that many became Scythians and later participated in Nineveh’s demise!

That God is “slow to anger” (1:3) may allude to how he delayed Assyria’s punishment, but humans must never kid themselves that God “will not at all acquit the wicked.” God will only let sin and wickedness go unpunished for so long.

Nahum portrays the instrument of Assyria’s destruction as being God Himself. “Nahum made ample use of the divine warrior theme, the picture of God as a military figure who wages war against those who resist him. Nahum taught that God punishes violence (2:12; 3:1, 4), idolatry (2:14), ruthless business practices (3:16), materialism (2:9; 3:4) and cruelty (3:19)”--*NIA ASB*.

Nahum opens with proclaiming that God protects and avenges His people. Three times in 1:2 the term “avenges” or

“vengeance” is used. God is ticked off at Assyria, and the clock is ticking!

“Man the fort!” God taunts the powerhouse empire, as if they could stop Him (2:1).

“Behold, I am against you,’ says the LORD of hosts; “I will lift your skirts over your face, I will show the nations your nakedness, and the kingdoms your shame. I will cast abominable filth upon you, make you vile, and make you a spectacle” (3:5-6). Chapter 3 is called a Woe Oracle--“WOE to the bloody city!” (3:1)--and describes the cause of Nineveh’s destruction. She must reap what she sowed!

“Nahum’s prophecy of judgment was intended to bring hope to the people of Judah, who had suffered Assyrian abuse for many years. God cares for his people and will punish those who abuse them. He will protect them (1:7), free them from oppression (1:13, 15) and restore them (2:2)”--*NIA ASB*.

Jesus Christ was the Creator of everything, and verses 3-6 proclaim His power over all elements of the earth—a common formula of the Minor Prophets.

Legendary brutality!

A den of ravaging lions (2:11-12) is an appropriate image to characterize the Assyrians whose prowess and power featured cruelty and viciousness beyond imagination. Foes cringed. Assyria was especially harsh against Judah and Israel, which Their Comforter did not appreciate!

Nahum 3:4 says, “piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses ...” The Assyrian king Shalmaneser

III bragged about erecting a pyramid of chopped-off heads in front of an enemy's city. Other ruthless kings stacked corpses like cordwood by the gates of defeated cities. Assyria impaled and filleted enemies. Imagine the intimidation!

God controls history

In 1:14, the prophet relays God's direct warning to Nineveh that their idolatrous religion will be "cut off." In 2:7 God promises: "Nineveh is laid waste! ... Where shall I seek comforters for you?" Zephaniah 2:13-15 and Ezekiel 32:22-23 also predict the defeat and destruction of Nineveh.

C'mon, how could Nineveh be defeated? It appeared invincible!

Why, the city's walls stood 100 feet high, almost 8 miles long, enclosing an area about 1,700 acres, and were surrounded by a moat 150 feet wide. Attackers would have to fill in the moat before they could reach the walls. The "protective shield" in Nahum 2:5 refers to a large defensive shelter covered with hides to deflect stones and arrows. Protection? ... not if God says you are going down! "I will dig your grave, for you are vile" (1:14).

Nahum 1:8 says Nineveh will come to "utter end" "with an overflowing flood." While the Bible in many places refers to an invading army as a "flood," the *NSB says*, "It is believed that the invaders of Nineveh entered the city through its flooded waterways. Archaeologists have found evidence of flood debris that may be associated with the destruction of the city." Nahum 2:6 adds that "the gates of the rivers are opened."

The end of this verse predicts "the palace is dissolved." Historian Will Durant writes: "Sennacherib ... raised at Nineveh a royal mansion called 'The Incomparable,' surpassing in size all

other palaces of antiquity” (*The Story of Civilization*, Vol. 1: *Our Oriental Heritage*, 1963 ed., p. 282). Though it deteriorated under his son Esarhaddon, the next and last great emperor, Ashurbanipal, extravagantly rebuilt it (pp. 282-283).

“The place where they are not known” (Nahum 3:17)

Concerning ancient Nineveh, the NSB notes “this prophecy came true literally—the city was destroyed so completely that its very existence was questioned until its discovery by archaeologists in the nineteenth century.” It was Austin Henry Laird, British archaeologist in 1845.

Two hundred years after Nineveh’s destruction, Xenophon and the Ten Thousand passed through the area and didn’t know it was there! The stories of Jonah and Nineveh were labeled a fable!

“For all its might, Nineveh fell quickly into ruin, leaving no trace but a mound which is known today as Tell Kuyunjik, ‘the mound of many sheep’” (*Eerdmans Handbook to the Bible*).

Recall how mighty King Nebuchadnezzar of the powerful kingdom of Babylon had to become like a beast of the field for seven years to learn “that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men” (Daniel 2:17). Nebuchadnezzar learned that “those who walk in pride He is able to put down” (4:37). Daniel advised the mighty king to “break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity” (verse 27).

For individuals and nations, Nahum is a stern warning to deal

justly while God puts you in power, and do not oppose God or His people.

For nations, God “has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings” (Acts 17:26).

God allowed Assyria to dominate the ancient Near East between 900-612 B.C.



Shockingly, Deuteronomy 32:8-9 says God “set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel.

For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance." God foreordained not only the existence of Israel but its population size as far back as creation.

A principle of the Bible is that Gentile nations get discussed pretty much to the extent that they are dealing with Israel. The *NIVASB* concludes "The once formidable Assyrian Empire had come to a decisive end."

By all appearances but regrettably, NOT! Keep reading for the rest of the story ...

A bigger blockbuster sequel is coming!

Most Bible prophecies are dual—relevant for big turning points of the past but even more so for big end-time events coming in the near future—and Nahum is no exception.

Nahum has many verses showing it is a dual prophecy:

The “day of trouble” (1:7) refers to the Day of the Lord—the last year of the 3-1/2 year Great Tribulation when Jesus Christ intervenes to punish the rebellious (Revelation 6:16-17). God’s people will be afflicted no more” (verse 12) after Jesus Christ conquers all foes at His second coming. The wicked enemy will never again be allowed to pass through their land (verse 15). The description of Nineveh as the great harlot of sorceries (Nahum 3:4) identifies it with other prophecies of end-time Babylon (Revelation 17-18, Isaiah 47).

In 1:9 Nahum asks Nineveh, “What do you conspire against the LORD?” Psalm 83:8 talks about Assyria forming a confederacy against God’s people in the end-time.

When Assyria took Israel into captivity in 722 B.C., they became known as the lost 10 Tribes. That’s our trouble:

Most don’t know who Israel is today!

People think it’s the one in the Middle East which is mainly the one tribe of Judah. But while God has enabled the Jews to

survive by being the most powerful nation in the volatile Middle East, they are not the birthright English-speaking peoples whom God has made the modern recipients of His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. [Please help yourself to a free booklet [<https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/booklets/the-united-states-and-britain-in-bible-prophecy>] that will open your eyes to all the exciting details about the identify of Israel which is crucial to understanding the Bible.]

To compound our perilous situation, most don't know who modern Assyria is

No nation is called Assyria. That sets us up to be blindsided because Assyria has always been God's rod to punish the rebellious Israelites.

“Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Yet he does not mean so, nor does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations” (Isaiah 10:5-6).

Once again Assyria is going to be God's rod to punish rebellious Israel and, oh no!, rebellious Israel doesn't realize God says they are going to go into captivity for their sins and they won't see who's coming to do it to them! ((Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28; Jeremiah 30:8).

Remember, God “never lets the guilty go unpunished” (1:3, New Living Translation). That goes for Assyria too! God's rod should humbly submit to letting God's hand regulate the punishment

they dish out. The same goes for Babylon for their pride and vanity in going overboard as God's instrument for punishing Judah. The prophet Habakkuk pleads with God, "Should you be silent while the wicked swallow up people more righteous than they?" (1:13, NLT).

Modern Assyria is the people of Central Europe, especially Germany,

who will become the leading nation of the coming Beast power called the King of the North and the seventh revival of the Holy Roman Empire. Germany led World War I and II efforts to conquer the world, which had to be repelled by modern Israel. In 1:9-11, God accuses Nineveh of conspiring against the Lord. This could apply in some sense to Assyria's attempt to conquer Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah, but this was about 80 years before Nahum wrote. This really applies to the end-time when modern Assyria as part of the Beast will oppose Christ at His second coming. God through Nahum comforts His people that He "will break off his yoke from you, and burst your bonds apart." This refers to God using modern Assyria as His rod of anger (Isaiah 10:5) to take modern Israelites into captivity. That is totally inconceivable to the English-speaking peoples who have been so utterly blessed by God but think it's our doing.

This time, Ephraim, Manassah and Judah will apparently be conquered in one month (Hosea 5:5-7). They will go into Great Tribulation for 3-1/2 years which is the same time the Beast will reign as the Times of the Gentiles.

Nineveh contained distinctive lion sculptures (2:11-13) and artifacts which have, appropriately, been moved to museums in Europe.

It's also interesting that the third of the seven Churches of (Revelation 2:13), and many of its idolatrous artifacts are now housed in Berlin's Pergamon Museum.

Looking to the end-time where "they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?'" (Revelation 13:4), these connections with the capital of Germany seem more than coincidental!

Sure sounds like Sennacherib, king of Assyria, when he boasted through his representative to Hezekiah and Judah: "Who was there among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed that could deliver his people from my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand?" (2 Chronicles 32:14).

Back then, God's one angel, probably Michael (Daniel 12:1), single-handedly slew 185,000 Assyrians and destroyed the "invincible" invader that had taken all of Judah and it looked like Jerusalem had no chance. Except that God decreed that Assyria would only "reach up to the neck" (Isaiah 8:8). Assyria came that close to taking down all 12 tribes!

In the end-time, when it gets so bad that "unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved ... for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:22). Christ conquers and sets up His Kingdom on earth!

Rebellious individuals and nations repent, are comforted and delivered.

Showing God's amazing mercy and power to restore, ultimately under Christ's millennial reign, "In that day there will be a

highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, “Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance” (Isaiah 19:23-25).

Taking the message of Nahum to modern Assyria, Israel| and the world

Modern Germany and Europe have been exposed to Scripture for centuries, and God's spiritual Church is taking the message of Nahum to modern Assyria and the entire world today as part of its Great Commission from Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:14, 28:19-20).

You can be part of God's modern Nahum!

We should relate because little is known about the spiritual Church of God today which is truly a "little flock" (Luke 12:32). Maybe you feel like a nobody.

The lesson is that the Church's Great Commission is not about us. It's about proclaiming the gospel of the soon-coming Kingdom of God on earth which Jesus Christ will administer, and all glory goes to God!

God has called us to be "the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace!" (1:15, quoted from Isaiah 52:7). We tell Judah and all others to keep God's "appointed feasts." I have been keeping them for 52 years and can tell you they teach God's plan of salvation and Jesus' role in every one of them, and they are a joy!

All of us individually and all nations must humble ourselves, ridding ourselves of pride. "God resists the proud, but gives

grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:5-7).

We must repent and submit ourselves to obeying the Great God. A major lesson of Nahum is that we must not return to the same sins we already repented of. God will not allow us to return to old sins forever. “Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Back to wallowing in the sty? That won’t do, pig!

Returning to your vomit? Get over it, Rover!

We must treat our sins like David did his foes: “I chased my enemies and caught them; I did not stop until they were conquered. I struck them down so they could not get up” (Psalm 18:37-38).

We must not be like ancient Israel: “Yet they kept on sinning against him, rebelling against the Most High in the desert. They stubbornly tested God in their hearts” (Psalm 78:17-18).

We must change so God can use us as a Nahum to show modern nations and individuals the way to God.

Nahum 1:2 is encouraging: “For the LORD will restore the excellence of Jacob”

“Verses 1 and 2 appear to be telling Nineveh to defend itself against a restored Israel ... around the time of Christ’s return, God will empower a resurgence of His people—and they will be used to help bring down the end-time Beast power, to ‘break

[Babylon] in pieces' (see Jeremiah 51:19-24; compare Isaiah 41:11-16; Micah 4:13; Zechariah 12:6; Zechariah 14:14). Furthermore, consider that *spiritual* Israel—the Church of God—will be glorified with divine power at this time and will accompany Jesus Christ as He confronts His enemies. Indeed, the dashing to pieces of enemies will be put in their power ... (Revelation 2:26-28)"--United Church of God, *Bible Commentary*, Nahum 2-3).

God knows and will use “those who trust in him” (1:7).

Why wait? This $\frac{3}{4}$ German from Manasseh is grateful to have a part.

Such untold comfort, deliverance and blessing await!



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