

Nahum – Judgment Brings Comfort

Dual Purpose: 1) Pronounce God's judgment on Assyria and 2) Bring comfort to Judah – God's chosen people.

Date: somewhere between 663BC (destruction of Thebes by Assyria) and 612BC (destruction of Assyria by Babylonians) probably @ 630BC (Jerusalem falls to Babylon in 605BC)

Written to Judah and Nineveh – the capital city of the Assyrian Empire.

Key verse: 1:7-8... the real focus is on the Sovereignty of God

Outline:

Nineveh's Judge (1.1-15)

Nineveh's Judgment (2.1-3.19)

Megathemes...

God judges...He allows no person or power to usurp His authority
God rules...God is all-powerful, and no one can thwart His plans

Assyrian... was the most powerful nation on earth. For over 200 years she sent her troops marching every spring. From the Persian mountains to the delta of the Nile, they marched. From the hills of Armenia to the coasts of the Mediterranean they went out to conquer. Wherever they marched, they destroyed. No treasure was safe, no crop was left standing, no family was secure when the Assyrians passed through. They built their empire on greed and blood. Their power was great, but God's was greater. As King of the universe He had power to express His wrath, strength to carry out His judgment. When God comes to settle accounts with idolatrous and inhumane empires, the whole earth knows it!

➔ **Is there a connection between Nahum's message and Jonah's?**

God's prophet, Jonah had warned them and they had repented. But now they had gone too far! God's judgments were soon to fall and Nineveh and the entire Assyrian Empire was about to become history.

➔ **Why does God tell His prophet to discuss wicked Nineveh??**

About 630BC, Nahum, a native of Elkosh (a Galilean village), looked back at the glory and impregnability of Thebes, the city by the Nile, which was captured by the Assyrians around 663BC, and ahead to 612BC when the Babylonians would utterly destroy the affluent and fortified capital of the Assyrian empire, Nineveh.

Nahum begins by describing the sovereign Lord and His power to judge. He then alternately speaks peace to Judah and doom to Assyria; in acrostic poetry in which the successive verses of chapter 1 begin with the successive

letters of the Hebrew alphabet. (Psalm 119 is the clearest OT example of a Hebrew acrostic).

Then the prophet, speaking as though he were issuing commands to the defender of Nineveh, vividly describes the future siege of the great city.

A Reminder of Divine Sovereignty

➔ Read chapter 1...

Nahum wastes no time getting to his first point: the King of the universe is angry with His enemies. The Assyrians and the men of Judah lived 600 miles apart. They spoke different languages and followed different customs. The citizens of Judah were God's special people. But He was still vitally and constantly interested in what the Assyrians did. The rivers, mountains, and deserts between Judah and Assyria were no barrier to Him. Nor was the Assyrian language foreign to Him. Assyrian culture He understood – well enough to be angry about what was going on.

➔ **What does it take for God to consider a nation His enemy?**

God Himself gives two reasons: 1) idolatry (1.14) and 2) inhumanity (3.19): The worship of other gods and cruelty to people whom God has made.

Where idolatry is present, inhumanity is bound to follow. When a nation reduces God to a caricature, it treats person as things. Assyria, with her capital Nineveh, was no exception (see 3.1-4).

➔ **Could the American way of life with its materialism, apathy, and thirst for pleasure become an idolatrous way of life?**

Savage sin calls for savage judgment. This is Nahum's point. An empire built on cunning, greed, and cruelty will collapse the same way.

A Rehearsal of Divine Judgment

➔ Read 2.2-6, 3.5-6, 3.8-10, 3.19

A mighty empire reduced to a heap of rubble. Three fierce nations – the Babylonians, the Medes, and the Scythians – came from south, east, and north and took the measure of Nineveh's might. The year was 612BC and the proud capital has never been rebuilt.

➔ **Why does God raise Babylon to pass judgment on Nineveh?**

Babylon would become the next world empire. This nation would also be used by God to bring judgment on His people – Judah.

Appeal... Proverbs 14.34...righteousness exalts a _____, but sin is a _____ to any people (NIV)

Next Week: ...Zephaniah – God speaks to people yearning for utopia