

Book of the Twelve: Nahum (“Comforter”)

1. **Historical Context:** The Book of Nahum is a prophecy written against Assyria, and the city of Nineveh in particular. The people of Assyria were extremely prideful in their kingdom. Sargon the II made Nineveh the capital city, which boasted such strength as a surrounding 100 foot high wall wide enough for 4 chariots to ride side by side upon the top. Outside the wall, Nineveh was surrounded by 140 foot wide moat that was up to 60 ft deep. The Assyrians were also notoriously brutal and inhumane in their military conquests. The empire of Assyria brought bloodshed and heartache everywhere they expanded. The Assyrians had destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, and laid siege to Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah (around 701 BC).

Nahum refers to the destruction of Thebes in 3:8-13, which occurred in 663 BC. Nineveh was destroyed in 612 BC, so the prophecies of Nahum must fit between these two events. Nineveh was an ancient city, but gained prominence around the year 700 BC when Sennacherib rebuilt and expanded it, and made it his capital. At its peak, it was home to 100,000 – 150,000 residents. After its destruction, Nineveh remained unoccupied for many centuries. Eventually the city of Mosul was built on the opposite bank of the Tigris River. While the prophet Jonah’s message of warning was heeded by Nineveh and they repented, Nahum reveals a Nineveh that is unrepentant and headed for destruction.

2. **Author:** Nahum, the prophet of Elkosh (1:1)
3. **Date:** Between 663 B.C. and 612 B.C., circa 625 B.C.
4. **Summary:** Judgment of Nineveh, an enemy of God’s people.
5. **Primary Theme:** The destruction of God’s enemies is also the salvation and rescue of his people.
6. **Christ in Nahum:** In Nahum, YHWH is a jealous God, protective and defending his people. In Nahum, YHWH is a warrior, fighting for his people.
7. **Theological Themes:**
 - a. God’s justice in his punishment of the Assyrians and all his enemies for their wickedness (1:2-3, 9-11, 14)
 - b. God’s passionate jealousy in saving his people from oppression (1:2, 7-8, 12-13)
 - c. Divine “trash-talk”/taunts of God’s enemies.
 - d. The destruction of Israel’s enemies is meant for their comfort.
8. **Purpose(s):**
 - a. See 1:7-8 and 1:15
 - b. To assure the oppressed people of Israel that God would free them from the oppression of the Assyrians and all other wicked people.
9. **Outline/Structure:**
 - a. Superscription (1:1)
 - b. The Divine Warrior (1:2-15)
 - i. In Hebrew these verses are an acrostic poem of YHWH’s wrath and mercy (1:2-8)
 - ii. Doom for Nineveh and deliverance for Judah (1:9-15)

- c. The future destruction of Nineveh (2:1-3:19)
 - i. Nineveh besieged and pillaged (2:1-10)
 - ii. The lion taunt (2:11-13)
 - iii. Woe to the city of bloodshed (3:1-3)
 - iv. The sorceress-prostitute taunt (3:4-7)
 - v. The comparison with Thebes taunt (3:8-11)
 - vi. Final taunts (3:12-19)

10. New Testament Usage:

- a. Nahum 1:15 is similar to Isaiah 52:17, and is quoted by Paul in Romans 10:15.



Nahum 1:6-7, “Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the heat of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by Him. YHWH is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; He knows those who take refuge in Him.”

Who can endure the fire of YHWH’s wrath? Only YHWH Himself in the flesh, God the Son—Jesus Christ. We find a refuge from wrath only in the One who bore it in our place.

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