

NAHUM

What is it about?

Nahum pronounces the doom of Nineveh, an action accomplished by God; evil will be punished.

Audience, Author, Date

- Author: Nahum of Elkosh.
- Audience: Judah
- Date: 655-630 BC

Themes

- The Lord is slow to anger & long-suffering, a jealous God (for his own honor & people), wrathful & avenging (against his enemies), who controls nations & history; he is just, righteous, the majestic ruler of nature, good, merciful, gracious, loving, faithful.
- God had used Assyria as his scourge on unfaithful Israel, but he in turn brought well-deserved judgment on Assyria, according to his timetable & method.
- Nineveh fell because it was a godless & idolatrous city of violence, lust, & greed.
- The Lord is a stronghold for those who take refuge in him. He can handle any & all problems in their individual lives. He has defeated powers far greater than Assyria. He grants to his own ultimate deliverance & vindication.
- God as divine warrior & divine vengeance.
- God's power against human evil & nationalistic arrogance.

Introduction

Context

The prophet Jonah went to the Assyrian city of Nineveh to proclaim judgment against her. The Ninevites responded with repentance, and God spared them.

Micah prophesied after Jonah about God using Assyria to destroy Israel & Judah for their covenant violations: idolatry, adultery, prostitution/sexual immorality, coveting, stealing land & homes, premeditated evil, exploiting the vulnerable, lack of kindness & humility, rejecting the prophets, wanting preaching that permits sin, perverting justice, judges/priests/prophets taking bribes, witchcraft/sorcery/divination, trusting military strength, trusting religion over God, forgetting God's saving acts, pride, fraud, lying, & building society through bloodshed.

King Hezekiah turned Judah back to God, so God spared Jerusalem from Assyria (2 Ki. 19). Israel was destroyed. But God later fulfilled His promise, destroying Jerusalem via Babylon. God used Assyrian - a barbaric, violent nation - to punish Israel for their similar practices (Mic. 3:2-3, 10).

Nahum prophesied after Micah, declaring God's judgment against Assyria/Nineveh for their violence & oppression. God later used Babylon to overthrow Nineveh (612 BC). God used Assyria to punish Israel/Judah, but punishes Assyria for sinfully doing so (Isa. 10). God is sovereign over all nations & will enact justice.

Literary Features

- Genre: Prophecy; oracles of judgment.
- Taunts, pronouncements of woe, vivid narratives of destruction, & a psalm (1:2-8).

The Ethics of Nahum:

The implied ethics disapproves of the mistreatment of people by the powerful, since God punishes Nineveh for her crimes against lesser nations, despoiling her of the booty accumulated by violent crimes against different people groups. It is a thoroughly deserved punishment, such that those oppressed by her will applaud and approve her downfall (3:19).

Worth Memorizing

- 1:3: The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty.
- 1:7-8: The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

Compatibilism

- God's exhaustive sovereignty & genuine human moral responsibility are compatible.
- God sovereignly brings Assyria against His people to punish them, but Assyria doesn't intend to serve God. It intends destruction, self-exaltation, conquest, pride, & self-glorification (Isa. 10).
- Joseph: "You meant it for evil against me, but God meant it for good (Gen. 5:20).
- God ordains events without sharing the sinner's sinful intent or being responsible for sin. Assyria didn't invade Judah while wanting to obey God but being forced against their will, but because they want glory, wealth, & power.

Christo-Centricity

- The exhortation to "keep your feasts" (1:15) encouraged the faithful to look to the One who would fulfill them.
- Those familiar with Nahum's message will understand the necessity of the cross of Christ, the Son of the jealous & avenging God.

Outline

- I. Introduction (1:)
- II. A Psalm Descriptively Praising the Lord (1:2-8)
 - I. The Lord takes vengeance on his guilty adversaries (1:2-3a)
 - II. The Lord rules creation in majesty, and no one can stand before his wrath (1:3b-6)
 - III. The Lord delivers those who take refuge in him (1:7)
 - IV. The Lord destroys his adversaries (1:8)
- III. The Lord's Coming Judgment on Nineveh and Deliverance of Judah (1:9-15)
 - I. The destruction of wicked, plotting Nineveh (1:9-12a)
 - II. Judah, having been afflicted by the Lord, is freed from Assyrian bondage (1:12b-13)
 - III. Peace and deliverance for Judah (1:15)
- IV. Focus on Nineveh: The Lord's Coming Judgment (2:1-13)
 - I. The beginning of the attack on Nineveh (2:1)
 - II. Reasons for judgment: the Assyrians' plundering of Judah, though Judah's restoration by God is planned (2:2)
 - III. Attacking soldiers and military action at Nineveh (2:3-5)
 - IV. The fall and plundering of Nineveh (2:6-9)
 - V. A taunting song portraying Nineveh's destruction because of the city's lust for conquest (2:10-12)
 - VI. The Lord speaks a word of judgment (2:13)
- V. Again, Focus on Nineveh: More concerning the Lord's Coming Judgment (3:1-19)
 - I. Reasons for judgment: the violence, lying, and greed of Nineveh (3:1)
 - II. Military action at Nineveh and the ensuing slaughter of the Assyrians (3:2-3)
 - III. Reasons for judgment: the wickedness of Nineveh (3:4)
 - IV. The Lord speaks a word of judgment (3:5-7)
 - V. Comparison with the conquest of Thebes (3:8-11)
 - VI. A taunting song presenting Nineveh's inevitable destruction because of the city's incessant evil (3:12-19)