

Nahum

Authorship: Nahum. Biographical details are unknown. Even the location of his hometown, Elkosh (1:1), is uncertain.

Date: The fall of Thebes (also called “No-amon,” 3:8), which occurred in 663 B.C., had already taken place by Nahum’s time. Assuming that Nineveh’s fall in 612 (the focus of Nahum’s prophecy) was yet to come, Nahum’s ministry would be dated sometime between those two events. The zeal for feasts and vows (1:15) may indicate a time after Josiah’s reforms had reached their climax with the rediscovery of the law in 621 B.C.

Background: The end of the seventh-century was an exciting time for Judah, as the great reformer Josiah (640-609) ruled in Jerusalem. Over this time of blessing, however, loomed the threat of invasion by Assyria. Nineveh, Assyria’s capital, had been the site of a great revival in Jonah’s day, nearly 150 years before in about 750 (Jonah 3:4-10). But the revival had faded quickly, and Assyria destroyed Israel’s northern kingdom in 722 B.C. and nearly destroyed Judah in 701 B.C. Now Assyria had set its sights on Judah once again, so God called Nahum to proclaim His final judgment against Nineveh. Nineveh’s doom would come soon after Nahum’s warnings, when the rising Babylonian empire defeated it in 612 B.C. Babylon would go on to win victories against Judah in 605 B.C. and 597 B.C., finally defeating it in 586 B.C. Zephaniah and Jeremiah were Nahum’s contemporaries.

Recipients: The first hearers of Nahum may have been the Ninevites themselves. Possibly the prophet traveled there to deliver his message, just as Jonah had done for an earlier generation. Ultimately, however, this was a message for God’s people. Nahum was preserved by the people of Judah in their canon of Scripture at least partly because it contained a message important to them.

Purpose: (1) To announce Nineveh’s doom, but in a larger sense to affirm that God punishes all sin. Though He is “slow to anger,” He will not let wickedness go unpunished (1:3); (2) To affirm God’s sovereign control over history. Nineveh’s destruction was not coincidence or simply the transition from one human empire to another. It was the direct result of God’s judgment; (3) To assure Judah that God cares for His own.

Key Verse

“The LORD is good,
a stronghold in the day of trouble;
he knows those who take refuge in him”
(Nahum 1:7 ESV).

Meaning of Name

Nahum, the seventh-century Israelite prophet against Nineveh, has given his name to this book as its composer. His name means “Comfort” in Hebrew.

One Sentence Summary

Nahum prophesied that God would destroy Nineveh because of its wickedness and violence, never to rise again.

Key Term: “Nineveh”

Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, the world superpower of the 600s B.C. God’s wrath against Nineveh for its sins is the concern of this book. Nahum, the prophet of God’s judgment, followed Jonah, the prophet of God’s mercy, to Nineveh.

Outline:

- I. Nineveh’s Doom Declared (1:1-15)
 - A. The Lord’s Patience (1:1-3a)
 - B. The Lord’s Power (1:3b-5)
 - C. The Lord’s Presence (1:6-8)
 - D. The Lord’s Purpose (1:9-14)
 - E. The Lord’s Protection (1:15)
- II. Nineveh’s Doom Described (2:1-13)
 - A. The Siege of Nineveh (2:1-8)
 - B. The Sack of Nineveh (2:9-13)
- III. Nineveh’s Doom Deserved (3:1-19)
 - A. The Fierceness of Nineveh (3:13)
 - B. The Filthiness of Nineveh (3:4-7)
 - C. The Folly of Nineveh (3:8-10)
 - D. The Fear of Nineveh (3:11-13)
 - E. The Fall of Nineveh (3:14-19)



Sources:

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