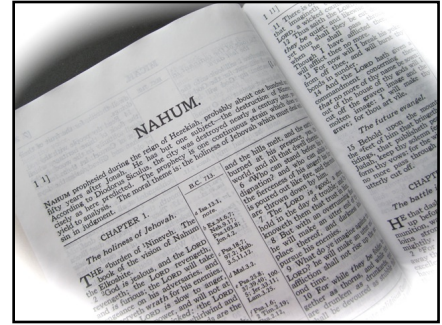


## Introduction

### Historical Situation:

I expect many of us have read the prophets and wondered: “What are they speaking about?”, “Are the judgements past or future?”, “Who are the warring nations?”, etc.



- a) In books such as Nahum it can be difficult to know who is being spoken to or about. For instance: what is the “place” (ch. 1:8); who is the “He that dasheth in pieces” (ch. 2:1); who is “Huzzab” (ch. 2:7); who is going to get abominable filth “cast upon thee” (ch. 3:6)? Unless such matters are understood it could be easy to get the wrong understanding. In Nahum God is speaking about and to the Assyrians under their king (ch. 3:18). A more detailed presentation is given under “Structure”.
  - b) Nahum is given a “burden”, but what is a “burden”? In this context the “burden” is “a message of assured judgment” upon a people. When God speaks of a “burden” it could be:
    - i) Concerning a place such as: Babylon (Isa. 13:1), Moab (Isa. 15:1), and “Nineveh” (Nah. 1:1).
    - ii) It also could be a “message of assured condemnation” on an individual (Jer. 23:34), the “Prince in Jerusalem” (Ezek. 12:10); the “King of Princes” (Hos. 8:10).
    - iii) At other times it was a vision (Hab. 1:1).
- Nahum tells of the Assyrians judgement going to fall, and there is no nullifying it for God says: “I am against thee” (ch. 2:13; 3:5). If there was nothing else said, a statement such as this when spoken by the Lord is frightening. God speaks in this manner in 14 verses (Jer. 21:13, 50:31; Ezek. 5:8, 21:3, 26:3, 28:22, 29:3, 10; 35:3; 38:3; 39:1; Nah. 2:13; 3:5)
- c) When the Assyrians invaded Israel there was the deportation of Israel (2 Kgs. 17:23-24) and it would seem that at that time Nahum was able to escape into the territory of Judah. Possibly he witnessed the seven years after the siege of the city by Sennacherib, and the destruction by the Syrian host when 185,000 perished in one night (2 Kgs. chs.18-19)
  - d) Scholars are not unanimous in that which they say is the period of time between Jonah and Nahum, but all agree it was somewhere between 100 and 150 years. My research would have me to believe Nahum ministered about one hundred years after the ministry of Jonah. The people who repented when Jonah preached were sincere, however, the succeeding generations were marked by departure from God until, by the time Nahum wrote, there was complete apostasy. Being apostates they became “adversaries” and “enemies” of God (ch. 1:2); a “bloody city” (ch. 3:1); and “wicked” (ch. 3:19). Being self deceived they thought they were “quiet” (secure), judgment would come. They had defied God and God will tolerate that only for so long before He comes in judgment (2 Kgs. 19:21–28). Nahum was God’s chosen vessel to prophecy the final overthrow of Nineveh and the Assyrian empire. Righteous retribution would be meted out and the empire that had been built by violence and cruel oppression would be treated in the same way under the providential dealings of God.
  - e) While Nahum’s message was one of condemnation without mercy to Assyria, yet it was a message of comfort to Israel. How suitable that God used a man whose name means comfort, to bring comfort to a fearful people who lived in fear of the military power of Assyria (1:7, 12, 13).

## Author

As far as Nahum is concerned he is identified as the “Elkoshite”. Nothing more is known of the man. He is not to be confused with “Naham” (1 Chron. 4:19), the brother-in-law of Ezra. His name also means “comfort”. There is another “Nahum”, “Naum” (Lk. 3:25), but it is not this man.

## Key Verses:

ch. 1:2-7; 2:13; 3:5-6

## Key Words:

- a) "Utter end" (ch. 1:8, 9)
- b) "Fire" (ch. 1:6; 3:13, 15)
- c) "Devour" / "devoured" (ch. 1:10; 2:13; 3:13, 15)
- d) "Destroy" / "Cut down" / "Cut (thee) off" (ch. 1:12, 14, 15; 2:13; 3:15)

## Key Reoccurring Themes:

- a) Destruction by fire (ch. 1:6, 10; (devoured as stubble) 2:3-4, 13; 3:13, 15)
- b) Military disaster (ch. 1:12-14; 2:1, 3-5, 13; 3:2-3, 8-11, 12-15, 19)
- c) Nineveh's wicked opposition to the Lord and his people (ch. 1:2-3, 8-9, 11, 13, 15)
- d) Nineveh's cruelty and barbaric behaviour (ch. 2:11-3:1, 4, 19)
- e) The Lord's opposition to Nineveh (ch. 1:2-6, 8-9, 14; 2:13; 3:5)
- f) Nineveh's decadence typified by drunkenness (ch. 1:10; 3:11)
- g) Nineveh's helplessness in the face of disaster (ch. 1:10; 2:9-10; 3:11, 13)
- h) Nineveh's exposure to shame (ch. 1:14; 3:5-7)
- i) The destruction of Nineveh and the idolatrous religion (ch. 1:11, 14; 2:6, 11-13; 3:18-19)
- j) The dispersion of the population (ch. 1:8; 2:1, 7-8; 3:7, 10-11, 16-18)
- k) Nineveh's extinction (ch. 1:8-9, 12, 14-15; 2:13; 3:7, 19)
- l) The vindication of Judah (ch. 1:3, 7, 12-13, 15; 2:2)

## Aspects of God:

1) Nahum gives us a clear description of God by His Names:

- a) GOD (ch. 1:2). He is "El" signifying the "mighty, strong, and prominent". Used 250 times in the Old Testament. While the word "faith" does not occur in the following verses, they indicate that which faith enables one to have:
  - i) Faith finds its security in El. "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." (Psa. 18:2)
  - ii) Faith finds its delight in El. "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." (Psa. 63:1)
  - iii) Faith finds comfort in its relationship with EL. "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation." (Psa. 89:26)
  - iv) Faith finds confidence in El. "I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD." (Psa. 140:6)
- b) LORD (ch. 1:2). He is Jehovah and as such it reveals:
  - i) The faithfulness of the LORD. "They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee: for Thou, Jehovah, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee." (Psa. 9:10)
  - ii) The fidelity as the Covenant keeping LORD. "I am the Lord (Jehovah) that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God." (Lev. 11:45)
  - iii) The supreme sovereignty of the LORD. "Ye shall keep my commandments. . . I am the Lord (Jehovah)." (Lev. 22:31)
  - iv) The moral fidelity of the LORD. "I am the Lord (Jehovah) which sanctify you." (Lev. 20:8)
  - v) The immutability of the LORD. "I am the Lord (Jehovah), I change not." (Mal. 3:6)

2) His characteristics:

- a) He is jealous, revengeth, furious, takes vengeance on His adversaries, reserveth wrath for His enemies (ch. 1:2). He is slow to anger, great in power, and just for He will not acquit the wicked. (ch.1:3)

- 3) His abilities
  - a) He controls the wind and clouds (very possibly sand clouds), sea, and rivers are under His command. (ch. 1:4)
  - b) He makes fruitful or barren. (ch. 1:4)
  - c) He is such that before Him the mountains quake, the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His presence, and all that dwell therein. (ch. 1:5)
- 4) This manifestation of God leads to two questions:
  - a) Who can stand before His indignation? (ch. 1:6)
  - b) Who can abide the fierceness of His anger? (ch. 1:6)
- 5) Why is this frightening intimidating manifestation of God given?
  - a) It was given that Assyria might understand that once he rises to judge no earthly power can stand against him.
  - b) It manifests the long-suffering of God.
    - i) When Nahum prophesied, Assyria was at the height of its glory and debauchery. Despite sending Jonah, who warned of imminent judgment (Jon. 3:4), Nahum simply prophesied that judgment would fall on them without specifying a time. It is in this we see that God is not some ogre like being waiting with anticipation to pour His fury upon them. He waited approximately another hundred years before Assyria and Nineveh fell.

Notes:

- 1) Jonah and Nahum
  - a) These two books are both written about Nineveh but with a difference? Jonah had preached, and they had repented. Now as apostates God was under no obligation to warn a second time, yet He did. The passing of years does not change God's goodness or severity, and therefore His principles for behaviour from saint or sinner are the same. Sinners are still warned to flee, even if the individual only heard the message on one occasion years ago, it still stands true. If God has spoken to a saint concerning an act they ought to do, or not do, and it was years ago when He spoke, the message is just the same today. They are the only two books which end with a question. (Jon. 4:11; Nah. 3:19)
- 2) The comfort Nahum brings.
  - a) Nahum, whose name means comfort, speaks comfort to every saint who is suffering or seeing injustice. He saw the wickedness of the Assyrians, he knew their savagery, and knew no nation could stand against them. He, like the nations and Israel, had to stand by helplessly as these people slaughtered and tortured without mercy. The questions had to be asked: "Where is God?"; "Why does God not do something?"; "Why did He spare them when Jonah preached?" But this desire for justice had to have right motivations.

We see the same thing today. Little children are abused and the abusers go free! A drunk kills a little child and gets out of jail in a couple of years! Man slaughters unborn and new borns because the mother does not want the child, and it is accepted, but there is punishment for killing a spotted owl! Where is the justice? And I can do nothing but stand back helplessly.

I am glad there is going to be a day when the justice will be executed. Therein I ask the question: "Why will I be glad?"; "Is this the Christian attitude when I am told to love my enemies?" (Matt. 5:44). The whole question turns on the matter of "Why will I be glad?" The scriptures teach: "The Lord reigneth . . . let the fields rejoice . . . then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the Lord, because He cometh to judge the earth" (1 Chron. 16:31-33). When the Lord comes in righteous judgment then creation will rejoice. Nahum rejoiced at such a contemplation. He was not rejoicing because of his own anger at what they did, or the feeling of the need for justice to be done. He rejoiced that there was coming a day when man's mocking of God and God's silence would come to an end. Man would learn God cannot be mocked, and his forbearance in restraining judgement did not mean it was nullified. We ought to pray for God's name and character to be vindicated, for this is

holy, and just, and good. The elect cry for this (Lk. 18:7-8), the slaughtered saints cry for this (Rev. 6:10-11), and God has pledged Himself to do this (Nah. 1:2; Rom. 12:19).

3) The prophetic foreshowing in Nineveh.

- a) A consideration of Nineveh and its rulers will show prefigures of the present world and the Beast. Like Nineveh, this world dwells in imagined security (Nah. 1:12 “quiet” indicates secure); it is a sphere where false religions saturate it and thus deny God His rights. It is physically, spiritually, and intellectually corrupt. There is unspeakable cruelty and distortion of justice, and God is nothing other than a figure for mockery and denial. (At the Soul Train Awards Jamie Foxx said: “Obama is our Lord and Saviour!”) Nineveh, like Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Pet. 2:6), stand as an ancient warning to the nations of today, “God is not mocked” (Gal. 6:7). His rights are based on truth and He will judge in righteousness (Rev. 19:11). God is not a politically correct God, He is not an open minded God, He is the moral Absolute and Governor of the Universe (Rev. 4:2-8), and because He is such, this world is fast heading for His judgement.
- b) We also read: “There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord, a wicked counsellor” (Nah. 1:11). This individual is identified as the “King of Assyria” (ch. 3:18), and stands in opposition to God and against the manifestation of His ruling in Jerusalem, which is the city of the great King (Psa. 48:1-3). Assyria had two political figures who could fit such a description, Sennacherib and Rab-skaheh. The one who best suits the description here is Rab-skaheh (although he was not the king, he spoke for and represented him) who sought to counsel Israel (2 Kgs. chs. 18:28-35). This man, like Goliath (1 Sam. 17:10, 45) and Pharaoh (Ex. 5:2), mocked God speaking blasphemously (2 Kgs. 18:25, 33-35; 19:4, 22-23). He exalted himself, boasting that his power was greater than God’s. However, in time all his boasting came to nought by the Angel of the Lord (2 Kgs. 19:35) who slew 185,000 of his men. Returning to Nineveh, Sennacherib was slain by his sons at an unexpected time (2 Kgs. 19:37), so shall the man of sin in a future day suddenly be smitten by the Lord (2 Thess. 2:8).

### Suggested Structure:

#### No. 1

- a) The character of God revealed verbally. (ch. 1:1-8)
- b) The character of God revealed judiciously. (ch. 1:9-3:19)

#### No. 2

- a) The Judge (1:1-7)
- b) The Judgement (1:8-3:17)

#### The Speakers

- a) Introduction (ch. 1:1)
- b) Speaking about God (ch. 1:2-8)
- c) Nahum speaking for God to Nineveh (ch. 1:9-11)
- d) God speaking to Israel (ch. 2:12-3:2)
- e) God is speaking about what he is going to do to Nineveh (ch. 3:3-7)
- f) God speaking and informing Nineveh that they are no better than the city “No” when it comes to combating God (ch. 3:8-10)
- g) God’s final words to Nineveh (ch. 3:11-19)

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**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.  
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia