

NAHUM: DOOM OF NINEVEH
NAHUM & HIS TIMES

Monday, July 20

Reading: Nahum 1-3

Nahum 1:1 *A prophecy concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. The LORD's Anger Against Nineveh* **2** *The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath.*

The little book of Nahum concludes the story of Nineveh. Jonah had preached to Nineveh around 760 BC. But their repentance was short lived. By the next generation, they were back to their evil ways. The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC and tried to do the same to Judah in 701 BC. But this invasion was thwarted by the prayers of godly King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 36-37). However, King Hezekiah's son Manasseh (697-640 BC) did not follow his father's godly ways. He was Judah's most wicked king, following the idolatry practices of the heathen nations (see 2 Kings 21 & 2 Chronicles 33). He rebelled against Assyrian control and was imprisoned, where Manasseh ultimately repented. But it was too late! The people of Judah followed his wicked example and his repentance in the end did not deter them.

This is the environment in which Nahum gave his prophecy. Though Assyria and its capital of Nineveh seemed unstoppable, God promised to bring destruction on them for their sins. The words of Jonah that Nineveh would be overthrown and destroyed would finally come true. This was also a warning for God's people – the Jewish nation. They too were opposing God and were in danger of judgment if they did not repent. The final destruction of Nineveh would occur in 612 BC at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army. Nahum prophesied about this destruction about 40 to 50 years before it occurred (c. 664-654 BC).

AUTHOR: We know very little about the prophet Nahum. He is not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. His hometown of Elkosh has not been identified by archaeologists. He delivered his message to the people of Judah during the height of Assyria's power in the Middle East. The name 'Nahum' means comfort. And that is exactly what his message would bring to God's people – comfort in the middle of fear from the Assyrian threat.

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. At the height of Assyria's power, they had conquered from the Euphrates River (present day Iran) to the Nile River in Egypt. Their fierceness and cruelty were well known. "The Assyrian kings bragged about skinning their captives, cutting off appendages, and making piles of human heads."¹ The coming of the Assyrian army brought dread to every nation they attacked. This reputation was well deserved and explains why the prophet Jonah wanted them to be destroyed.

Nahum's times look much like our own! He lived among a people in rebellion against God and under the threat of war and international conflict. And yet he pointed people to the truth that God was in control. Even when it appeared that wicked people were getting away with their rebellion against God, the Lord will bring ultimate justice.

How do these truths help you face the national and international scene today?

¹ Eric J. Tully. Reading the Prophets as Christian Scripture, p. 321