

NAHUM



THE MAIN EVENT THE POWER OF HEAVEN VS. THE POWER OF EARTH AND THE WINNER IS...

CONSIDER, COMPREHEND, CONNECT
A 3 C'S CONTEMPLATIVE STUDY
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All Scriptures quoted, partially quoted, or adapted from the New American Standard Version of the Holy Bible with 1995 Update.

Introduction to Book of Nahum

Author: Like many of the prophets whose books bear their names, little is known of the man, Nahum. Nahum means “comfort”, and this certainly helps us to understand the character and the content of the book. What little we do know of Nahum tells us he was a man who understood what it meant to live under oppression and still cling tenaciously to faith that God would deliver one day.

Chapter 1, verse 1, lists the name and origin of Nahum. Most scholars do not agree concerning the location or even existence of a city called Elkosh; however, this should not cause any undue concern for studying the contents of this short but powerful work. The best estimated location for the town of Elkosh, or the home of the tribe of Elkosh, which is a perfectly acceptable interpretation of “Elkoshite”, is the town of Capernaum. For those who have studied the New Testament, Capernaum was the place from which Jesus called some of His disciples and in which He spent much time ministering to the crowds. The name Capernaum is the Hebrew equivalent of “City of Nahum”. Since the city is in what would have then been called Judah, it stands to reason that this is the location of Nahum.

Other than the name of a possible location for Nahum’s home, nothing else is mentioned in the Bible or any extrabiblical record discovered to date.

Date: Scattered throughout the book of Nahum, we have some clues that address the time in which Nahum ministered. We will address these clues starting from the most ancient and ending with those most recent to zoom in on the time of Nahum’s ministry.

First, in 3:8-10, the fall of Thebes is mentioned as having recently occurred. According to the historical record, Thebes, a city in Egypt, fell in 663 BC when its leaders failed to resist the invading army of Assyria and other invaders. This would necessarily mean that Nahum ministered at some time after 663 BC.

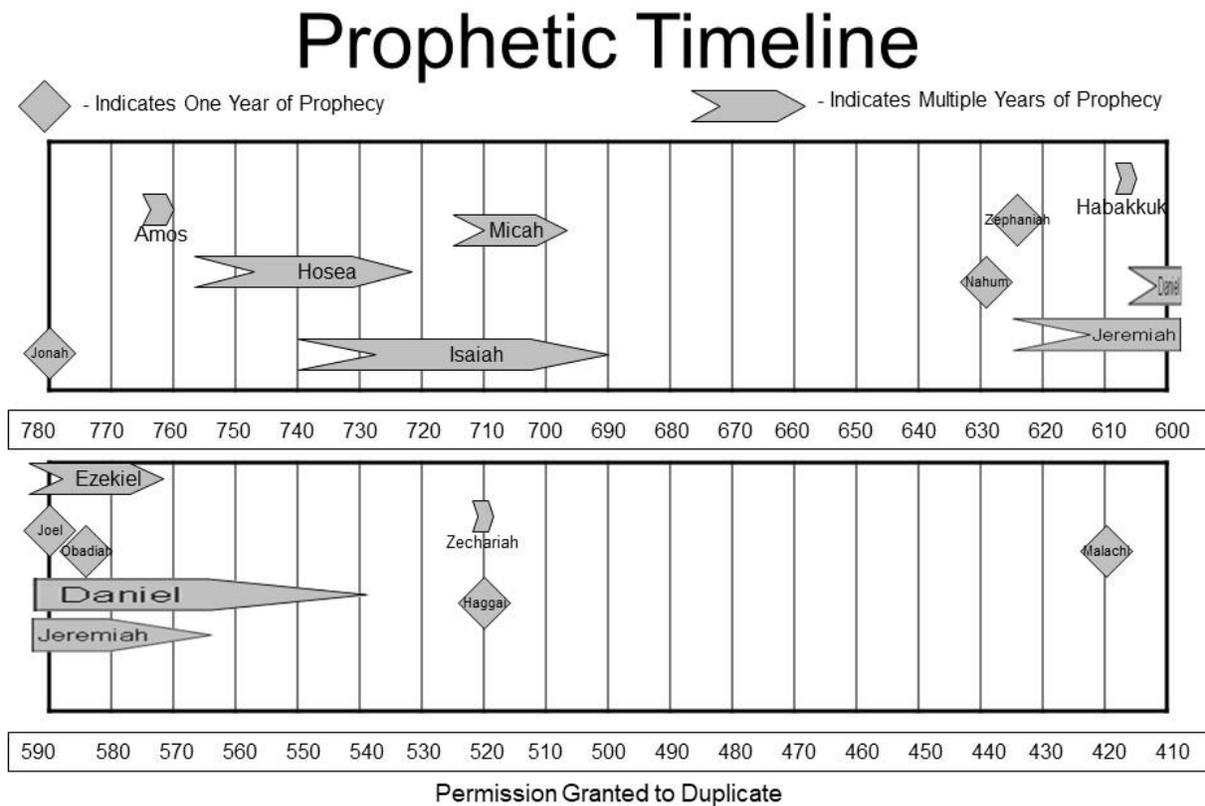
Second, the historical record also shows that Nineveh itself fell in 609 BC. Since Nahum’s prophecy includes God’s future destruction of the city, it would be reasonable to assume Nahum ministered prior to this date.

Third, Josiah began to institute reforms throughout the land of Judah in which he caused the people to cast off the worship of the gods of Assyria. This reform began in 622 BC. Since this was the aim of the book of Nahum, we can reasonably assume that the book had been written, read, and had taken root in the heart of the young king.

Lastly, Ashurbanipal, the last incredibly strong king of Assyria, died in 627 BC and Nahum tells of his eminent destruction, so the time of Nahum would have to be just prior to the king's death.

Putting all the pieces together, the most reasonable date for the ministry of Nahum is 629 BC. This would have been when Israel was weak and waiting for the maturation of its young king and Assyria was at its strongest but was headed for an immediate demise.

Contemporary Prophets: In order to see the contemporaries of Nahum, refer to the following chart:



Of note is the fact that Nahum would have been the first prophetic voice heard since the ending of Isaiah's ministry nearly 60 years prior. What was Isaiah's last word from the Lord? God is sovereign. Heaven is real. Hell is real. Choose to follow God. (Isaiah 66)

Historical Situation: Nahum comes on the scene in the middle of what can only be described as desperate times. Over a century ago, King Ahaz had gone to Tiglath-Pileser at Nineveh, the city that Nimrod had built back in the book of

Genesis (10:11) and asked for help against none other than Pekah, King of Israel (Judah's brethren), and Rezin of Syria. Tiglath-Pileser brought in an overwhelming force and delivered the people of Judah only to impose on them nearly impossible levels of taxation. They had been paying these taxes from that day right up to the time of Nahum.

In addition to the taxes, Judah had also been expected to worship the gods of Assyria. They did this wholeheartedly, even setting up altars in the temple of Yahweh itself! (See 2 Kings 16:10-16.)

Jonah had come and told Nineveh that God would destroy them if they did not repent. They seemed to have repented and God stayed His hand, so it looked like even God Himself would not help. It is into this world that Nahum walks with a message that needs to be heard and heeded today as well.

Main Focus of the Book: What was the message that Nahum came to deliver? While it may not jump off the page, the main focus of the book is that God is a deliverer to those who belong to Him, even if they are oppressed. This message is cloaked in a hymn or psalm that may seem to go against the "Love your enemies" message that Jesus came with, but the focus of Nahum, as directed by God, is to express that those who belong to God and place their faith in God can count on the deliverance only God can provide.

In addition to this main focus, several other minor foci appear as follows:

- God is sovereign over all of creation
- God's nature as seen through His
 - Universality
 - Justice
 - Omnipotence
 - Majesty
 - Mercy
 - Faithfulness
- The pervasive nature of sin

Outline of the Book of Nahum

While there are certainly many ways to outline this short work, below is an example of how one might attempt to outline it for better understanding.

- I. Call of the Prophet (1:1)
- II. God's Character Is Displayed (1:2-15)
 - a. God is capable of terrible destruction (1:2-6)
 - b. God is just in His judgment (1:7-8)
 - c. God's judgment is final (1:9-15)
- III. God's Deliverance Is at Hand (2:1-3:19)
 - a. Nineveh's destruction is at hand (2:1-3:19)
 - b. Nineveh has brought destruction on herself (3:1-15a)
 - c. Nineveh may resist, but will not prevail (3:15b-19)

Personal Word: Do not let the length of this book deter your drinking deep from its message. Also, do not let your sense of God's grace cause you to shrink back from hearing the hope of this book.

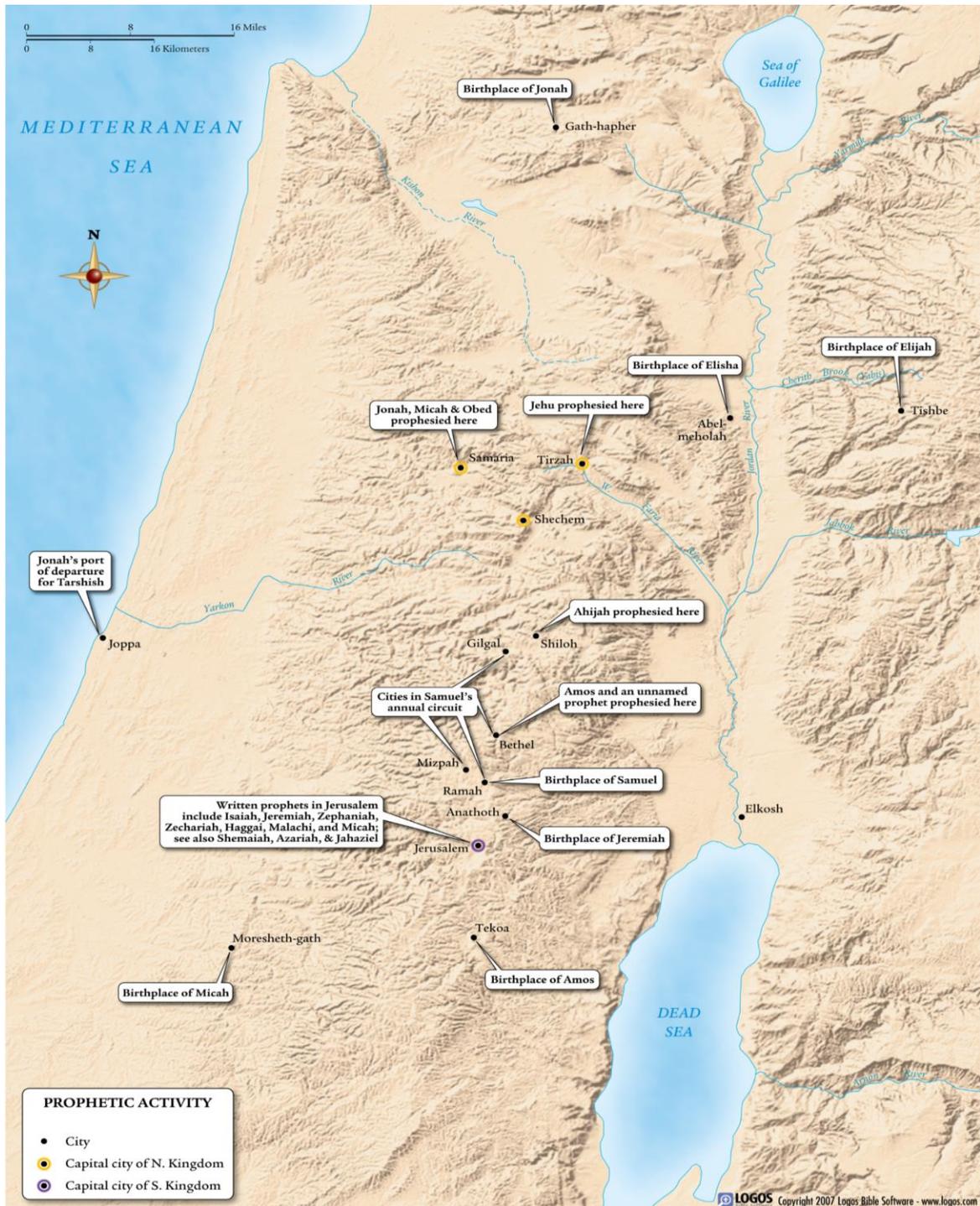
In our day of living with the fallenness of our world, it should come as a comfort and a challenge to consider God in all His power and majesty. Just as God foretold the destruction of the great city of Nineveh, He has also promised us His victory over death, hell, the grave, Satan, sin and evil in our world. As a child of God, we should both cheer at the coming of His judgment and realize we have been given a commission to declare to a lost world that they need to get ready. As you study these two lessons, I would encourage you to ask yourself, "Who do I know that needs to learn of God?"

Having considered them, tell them.

May God richly bless you as you study His word.

Dr. Jack M. Jacob

Geography of Nahum's Day



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¹ Thomas Nelson, *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts, Old and New Testaments, Updated and Revised Edition*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1996.

Reading Record for the Book of Nahum

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Record Observations Below:



Lesson One: Awesome or Terrible? Which is God? (Nahum 1:1-15)

A man is speeding down the highway, well over the speed limit, when he investigates his mirror and sees flashing red and blue lights atop a police car. As he pulls over, he begins

to complain about policemen that “only want to fill their quotas for tickets”. Sure enough, the policeman writes the man a ticket that would cost him a lot of money. All the rest of the way home, the man gripes and complains about the officer. He gets home and tells his wife about the unfairness of the public servant and something about needing glasses and exercising poor judgment. The wife, after listening to her husband complain, informs him that she had a story to tell as well. She had been walking from the grocery store to her car, in the parking lot, when two men attempted to grab her. Just at that specific moment, a policeman stepped out of his car and ran off the attackers. She went on and on about the helpfulness of the officer.

What was the difference between the two stories? They both involved interactions with police officers, but the perspectives were different in that the man was breaking the law and needed correction and the woman needed defending.

Our lesson today is much the same as the story related above except it was God delivering the Israelites from the power of the Assyrians. You might be tempted to read this account and think it makes God appear to be unusually cruel and mean, but that is only from the perspective of the Assyrians. From the perspective of the Israelites, God was being merciful by saving them from their cruel masters.

It can be the same for us today. If you have ever found yourself opposing God, you might be tempted to think His actions to get you to return to Him seem mean or cruel. But God is showing His love for you by drawing you back unto Him.

Describe a time when you thought someone was being mean to you, but when you thought about it later, you realized they were trying to help.

How did you feel at the time?

How did you feel later, after you realized they were trying to help?

Consider It

1. About whom was this oracle written? (1:1)
2. What words were repeated in God's description of Himself through Nahum? (1:2-6)
3. What hope did Nahum provide in God's description of Himself? (1:2-6)
4. What was the basis for God announcing judgment? (1:2-6)
5. How did Nahum describe God's awesome power? (1:2-6)
6. Who did God's control extend over in judgment? (1:2-6)
7. Which of God's qualities enabled Him to judge? (1:7-8)
8. What did this mean for His followers? (1:7-8)
9. What did this mean for His enemies? (1:7-8)
10. What about those who refused to even acknowledge God? (1:9-15)

11. To what does Nahum compare those that attempt to resist God? (1:9-15)
12. What did God promise would be the result of judging Nineveh? (1:9-15)
13. What was God's final word for Nineveh's sentence? (1:9-15)
14. What was the final message to Judah? (1:9-15)

Comprehend It

1. Who else had God sent to preach to Nineveh?
2. From this oracle, how do you understand their reaction to that person?
3. If you lived in Nineveh, how would you have responded to Nahum?
4. To whom was Nahum delivering this message?
5. How do you know?
6. Write 1:3 in your own words.

7. How does this verse help you understand Nahum's overall message?

8. What would be the effect of describing God's dominion over nature in 1:2-6?

9. How is Nahum's comparison of Nineveh to rocks like Jesus' comparison of the disciples to rocks in Luke 19:28-40?

10. From Nahum subsequent warnings, how did God expect Nineveh to react?

11. God begins to switch back and forth between addressing Judah and Nineveh. Fill out the following table to help keep the dialogue straight.

Verse	Audience	Message
12		
13		
14		
15		

Connect It

1. Is there anyone God hates in our world like Nineveh?

2. If so, who?

3. Based on God's dealing with Nineveh, what should be our first course of action with those listed in question #2?
4. Who is your **personal** greatest enemy?
5. How does this sequence of events apply to that situation?
6. Who did God use to bring about the destruction of Nineveh?
7. What does this tell us about our situations?
8. Do you ever forget just how powerful God is?
9. Why is that important?
10. How does Romans 5:10 apply to us?
11. Do you ever forget that you were once an enemy of God?
12. To what might this forgetfulness of being an enemy of God lead?

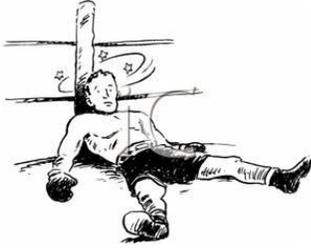
13. Which of God's promises in this chapter means the most to you?

14. Why?

15. Is there anyone you need to look at differently because of studying this lesson?

16. Is there an attitude that needs to change?

17. What specific action will you take today?



Lesson Two: And the Winner Is... (Nahum 2:1 Through 3:19)

When I was little, my Grandfather used to love to watch boxing. We would sit in the living room and he would explain to us why this boxer or that boxer wasn't as likely to win as the other one. He would go into lengthy explanations about why one had the advantage and was a sure win. Most of the time he was right, but occasionally a boxer would surprise him.

In this lesson, we see God speaking to the people of Israel and telling them that, although they were convinced the strongest government on earth could not be defeated, they would be. Although Assyria controlled the entire known world of their day, they would not stand forever. God was trying to tell Israel to hold on to their faith in Him and He would stand triumphant. They had to decide if they would be on His side or if they would continue to rebel and trust in their earthly masters.

This is the same choice you and I have every day. Do we believe God is all-powerful, or do we need to take things into our own hands? Do we believe God is all-knowing or do we need to help Him out? Do we believe God loves us or do we need to earn it? From this lesson, we should see that God is sufficient for all our needs. No matter how big the problem, mountain or situation, God is bigger. If we trust Him, we will be victorious in the end.

Describe a time when you took matters into your own hands instead of waiting on God:

How did things turn out?

Did you later trust Him? If so, how did it change the situation?

Consider It

1. How did God tell the Ninevites to prepare for His judgment? (2:1-13)
2. How would all their preparation help? (2:1-13)
3. What was God's goal in punishing Nineveh? (2:1-13)
4. What did God say to Nineveh as it prepared for defense? (2:1-13)
5. How did God say the people would respond to the destruction of the army? (2:1-13)
6. How would they respond to the defeat of the nobles? (2:1-13)
7. How did God plan to simultaneously destroy Israel AND provide for Judah? (2:1-13)

8. God next moved to presenting evidence of Nineveh's wrongdoing. Fill out the following chart:

Verse	Charge	Meaning
3:1		
3:2		
3:3		
3:4		

9. After the charges, God informed the Ninevites of their punishments. Fill out the chart below:

Verse	Punishment	Result
3:5		
3:6		
3:7		

10. Who did God use as an example of the futility of resistance? (3:8-15a)

11. What strengths did that nation have? (3:8-15a)

12. What were the results of her rebellion? (3:8-15a)
13. How did God anticipate Nineveh would respond to this warning? (3:8-15a)
14. What actions was Nineveh taking already? (3:15b-19)
15. What was God's final word? (3:15b-19)

Comprehend It

1. From God's initial advice to Nineveh in this court case, what did God say was His objective in judging Nineveh?
2. Habakkuk said it was unfair for God to use Nineveh to judge Israel. How would YOU respond to this?
3. If Assyria (whose capitol is Nineveh) was simply being used by God to judge Israel, what right did God have to judge Nineveh?
4. What was Nineveh's initial response to God's judgment in 2:3-4?
5. What happened when they finally reached the wall to defend the city?

6. What did God mean by this?
7. Notice that God was describing the action as though it had already happened. Why?
8. Where else have we seen God provide for His people while destroying His enemies?
9. How should Israel have responded to this?
10. Were the charges God described in chapter 3 new charges? Why or why not?
11. If the charges are not new, what questions might that raise for both Judah and Nineveh?
12. How complete was the punishment God described in chapter 3?
13. Why would God use No-Amon or Thebes (in Egypt) as an example of futile resistance?
14. When else have we seen God use locusts as examples when talking about Assyria?

15. Was this situation going to turn out differently than God said? Why or why not?

16. Why was God making their punishment so public?

Connect It

1. What is God's aim in punishing sin?

2. Is this always our aim when sin is to be punished? If not, what are some of our goals?

3. God told Nineveh not to let her present circumstances fool her about submitting to His judgment. Has God ever had to bring you down a bit? If so, describe the situation.

4. Nineveh's initial response, back in Jonah, was a superficial repentance that bought some time. Based on this event what would you say is an indicator of true repentance?

5. Does this still apply today? Defend your answer.

6. What response do you NOT read about from Judah?

7. Why do you think this might be?

8. What can we learn from the absence of a response?
9. Do you see any parallels between Nineveh's guilt and your own? If so, what?
10. How would people respond if you God punished you publicly for your sins?
11. God basically told Nineveh their punishment came on them because they were sleeping when God tried to get their attention before. What message is there for your nation?
12. What needs to change in your life because of studying this little book?
13. How do you plan to respond?

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