

‘Minor Prophets’ (3) - Nahum

The message of Nahum is stated at chapter 1 v1 *“The burden of Nineveh.”* Perhaps a hundred years before Nahum received his vision, the word of the Lord came unto another prophet, Jonah. The message to Jonah also concerned Nineveh, Jonah 1 v 2 *“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.”* On that occasion, as the prophet preached *“so the people of Nineveh believed God”* and *“they turned from their evil way”*. However, the belief in the true God was not followed by the next generation. Toward the end of the 8th century BC Sennacherib, king of Assyria, besieged Jerusalem and defied the Lord - 11 Chron 32 v 14 *“that your God should be able to deliver you out of mine hand.”* At that time God intervened and judgement fell on Sennacherib and his army and Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were saved. It may have been at this time, as Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem, that Nahum had his vision concerning the destruction of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire. However, it may have been another 50 years, after the destruction of *“populous No”* (3 v 8) in 663BC that Nahum prophesied.

Assyria, and Nineveh, had not *“turned from their wicked way”* for long – 3 v 1 *“Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery”*. God was going to intervene again in Nineveh and through his servant Nahum announces coming judgement. This time there was no repentance, there was no escape and judgement fell as predicted by Nahum.

In Nahum we learn that God is in control, that God takes note of wickedness and will judge (see 1 v 2). Although today the wicked seem to prevail and the righteous are trodden down, the day is coming when everything will be put right. Nahum is an example of what Nebuchadnezzar learned in Daniel 4 *“the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”*

Read – Nahum 1 v 1 – 10, 2 v 13 – 3 v 7

Chapter 1 The Announcement of Nineveh’s Destruction:
v8 and 9 *“He will make an utter end”*

Chapter 2 The Description of Nineveh’s Destruction:
v10 *“She is empty, and void, and waste”*. The battle for Nineveh in 612BC described

Chapter 3 The Reason for Nineveh’s Destruction:
v4 *“Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well favoured harlot”*

Chapter 1 The Announcement of Nineveh’s Destruction:

The judgement of God on Nineveh is announced and is certain. In v2, 3 we have stated that *“God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth”*. God will defend His honour and His people and will avenge Himself against those who oppose Him (see Rom 12 v 19 and Deut 32 v 43). Judgement may appear to be delayed, but *“The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked”* (compare 11 Peter 3 v 9, 10). That the Lord is *“slow to anger”* was known to Jonah when he preached in Nineveh Jonah 4 v 2 *“I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.”* God is not only *“slow to anger”*, but *“great in power”*. In v 3 – 5 there are three examples given of God’s power 1. He controls the *“whirlwind and the storm”* 2. At His word the waters are dried and the fruitful ground languisheth (droops) 3. The mountains quake. In view of such power v6 *“Who can stand before His indignation?”*

The judgement of God is specific, it is for the wicked. In the day of trouble, for those who trust in him v7 *“The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble: and He knoweth them that trust in Him.”* (compare Psa 46 v 1). This God of power can be relied upon. He is a *“very present help in*

trouble” for those who trust in Him. However, for His enemies, the city of Nineveh v8 “*with an overrunning flood He will make an utter end*”. The situation within Nineveh is described at v10 “*folden (intertwined) together*” i.e. a people united, a people who feel secure. They feel safe and are “*drunken as drunkards*” (compare Belshazzar Dan 5), but “*they shall be devoured*”.

v11 – 15 would seem to be a reference to the assault on Jerusalem by Sennacherib of Assyria in the days of Hezekiah (see 11 Kings 18 and 19). If the prophecy was written in these days, Nahum, whose name means consolation, brought encouragement to the people of God in Jerusalem. The Assyrian army was “*cut down*” on that occasion (11 Kings 19 v 35) and the same fate would come on Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. One of the outcomes of the judgement of God is relief for the people of God v 13 “*For now will I break his yoke from off thee*”. The chapter ends with the publishing of the good tidings concerning Assyria’s defeat. The exhortation to Judah in difficult days v15 “*keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows*”. An incentive, an encouragement to us to keep serving God in difficult days, for the ultimate triumph is the Lords.

Chapter 2 The Description of Nineveh’s Destruction:

Gen 10 v 11 gives the origins of Nineveh, built by Nimrod, that leader of men in rebellion against God. In Nahum 2 the end of Nineveh is recorded and the final battle for the city described. Historical records testify that this event took place in 612BC when Nabopolassar of Babylon, allied with Medes and Scythians overran Nineveh and razed it to the ground.

In v1 – 5 the preparation for battle within the city is described. The alarm of the approaching enemy is given; an enemy that is fierce and cruel. As the enemy surrounds the city v1 tells how the garrisons are reinforced and the soldiers are encouraged: but to no avail for 1 v 2 “*the Lord revengeth and is furious*”. In v3 – 4 the besieging army is described; dressed in scarlet and with powerful chariots. Despite the defence of the walls in v6 the city falls. Ancient records suggest that the Tigris River upon which Nineveh stood was in flood and a deluge of water broke down part of the defensive wall. Through this breach the enemy entered (see 1 v 8 “*with an overrunning flood*”)

In v7 – 10 Nineveh is taken and the survivors flee, despite the attempt to ‘hold the line’ “*Stand, stand shall they cry; but none shall look back.*” The city is looted and Nineveh is destroyed v10 “*She is empty, and void, and waste*”. What God had said in chapter 1 came to pass.

In v11 – 13 the majesty of Nineveh is seen as no more. The city that had been the home of powerful kings (lions), who walked with pride in the safety of Nineveh, is empty and waste. The people of Nineveh were a cruel and violent people “*The lion did tear in pieces*”, who broke the strength of neighbouring nations. But now “*where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions?*” The city is destroyed for v13 “*Behold I am against thee saith the Lord of hosts*” and 1 v 6 “*Who can stand before his indignation?*”

Chapter 3 The Reason for Nineveh’s Destruction:

Judgement was coming to Nineveh; the great city would be utterly destroyed. God is on the throne; His actions are righteous and 1 v 3 “*the Lord will not at all acquit the wicked*”. In the opening verses the wickedness of Nineveh and the reason for judgement are outlined 1. Physical wickedness – violence, falsehood, ruthlessness and cruelty 2. Spiritual wickedness – witchcraft and immorality. For these reasons v5 “*Behold, I am against thee saith the Lord*”.

In v8 – 10 an example from history is given; the destruction of the Egyptian city of No Amon, or Thebes, about 663BC by the Assyrian armies. No was another great and proud city v10 “*Yet was she carried away ... into captivity*”. The next few verses tell that Nineveh will be like No, v11 “*Thou also shalt be*”.

The chapter finishes with what John Grant calls ‘Nineveh’s unperceived weakness’ (Believers magazine March 2004). The stronghold is fortified, the defences strengthened; but they are unaware that their day of glory is over, that judgement is near (compare 1 Thes 5 v 2, 3).