

OT-OV

Lesson 134

1. Last week I completed our overview of Micah and when time expired we were reviewing the book of Nahum.

2. We need to review some of that learned before continuing our analysis of Nahum and his message to Nineveh. We will pick up with new material on page three.

3. Nahum was written by Nahum from Judah in about c. 650. The dating of the book is certainly problematic. The prophet predicts Nineveh will fall and since this prophecy came true in 612.

3.1 Many have concluded Nahum was penned shortly before the destruction of the city. As with every prophetic book in the Old Testament, this one bears the name of its author.

4. Nahum means "consolation" or "consoler." The nature of the contents of the prophecy is indicated in the title "burden." When used technically among the prophets, it signifies that which is a weight upon the heart of God and also upon the heart of the prophet; that is, a threatening or judgmental message.

5. The sole theme of the book is Nineveh-- the ancient capital of the Assyrian Empire.

6. Date and Authorship

6.1 The prediction of Nahum was penned probably shortly before the destruction of the city. Furthermore, in Nah 3:8 the prophet mentions the captivity of No (Thebes, the capital of Upper Egypt) as a historical event.

Nah 3:8 Are you better than Thebes, situated on the Nile, with water around her? The river was her defense, the waters her wall.

6.2 Ashurbanipal of Assyria (668-626 B.C.) brought about the downfall of the Egyptian city in the year 663. Hence, the book may be dated between 663. and 612., probably closer to the latter date.

6.3 Although nothing is known of Nahum's life, apart from the statement that he was an Elkoshite, no valid evidence has been presented to establish some other person as author of the prophecy.

6.4 Even the birthplace of the prophet is not known with certainty. Three principal suggestions as to its identity have been advanced. It was a town north of Nineveh. This view is founded on a tradition coming from the sixteenth century.

6.5 Jerome identified it with a small village in Galilee. It cannot be maintained with certainty that Capernaum (lit., the village of Nahum) was named after the prophet.

6.6 A third view locates the city in the territory south of Judah. It may well be that Nahum was born in Galilee, and later ministered in the south.

7. Historical Background

7.1 Along with the prophets Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, Nahum was a witness to the Southern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom had been carried into captivity by Assyria almost a century before in 721.

7.2 Now it was in the purpose of God to visit that nation which had been the rod of God's anger upon Israel. Nineveh had genuinely repented in the days of Jonah the prophet, but she was now ready for judgment because of her cruelty and cupidity.

7.3 She was ruthless in warfare and greedy for dishonest wealth. The power that had ruled western Asia for some three centuries was now to be broken by the combined might of the Babylonians and the Medes.

8. Outline

I. Title > 1:1

II. The majestic God of Israel > 1:2-8

III. God's judgment on Assyria > 1:9-14

IV. Judah's deliverance > 1:15

V. A taunt song upon Nineveh > 2:1-2

VI. The siege of Nineveh > 2:3-7

VII. The doom of Nineveh > 2:8-10

VIII. The reason for Nineveh's fall > 2:11-13

IX. The portrayal of the overthrow > 3:1-3

Nah 3:1 Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims!

Nah 3:2 The crack of whips, the clatter of wheels, galloping horses and jolting chariots!

Nah 3:3 Charging cavalry, flashing swords and glittering spears! Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses--

X. The moral failure of Nineveh > 3:4-7

Nah 3:4 all because of the wanton lust of a harlot, alluring, the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft.

Nah 3:5 "I am against you," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your shame.

Nah 3:6 I will pelt you with filth, I will treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle.

Nah 3:7 All who see you will flee from you and say, 'Nineveh is in ruins-- who will mourn for her?' Where can I find anyone to comfort you?"

XI. The unheeded warning > 3:8-10

Nah 3:8 Are you better than Thebes, situated on the Nile, with water around her? The river was her defense, the waters her wall.

Nah 3:9 Cush and Egypt were her boundless strength; Put and Libya were among her allies.

Nah 3:10 Yet she was taken captive and went into exile. Her infants were dashed to pieces at the head of every street. Lots were cast for her nobles, and all her great men were put in chains.

XII. The hopelessness of Nineveh's condition > 3:11-19

Nah 3:11 You too will become drunk; you will go into hiding and seek refuge from the enemy.

Nah 3:12 All your fortresses are like fig trees with their first ripe fruit; when they are shaken, the figs fall into the mouth of the eater.

Nah 3:13 Look at your troops-- they are all women! The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies; fire has consumed their bars.

Nah 3:14 Draw water for the siege, strengthen your defenses! Work the clay, tread the mortar, repair the brickwork!

Nah 3:15 There the fire will devour you; the sword will cut you down and, like grasshoppers, consume you. Multiply like grasshoppers, multiply like locusts!

Nah 3:16 You have increased the number of your merchants till they are more than the stars of the sky, but like locusts they strip the land and then fly away.

Nah 3:17 Your guards are like locusts, your officials like swarms of locusts that settle in the walls on a cold day-- but when the sun appears they fly away, and no one knows where.

Nah 3:18 O king of Assyria, your shepherds slumber; your nobles lie down to rest. Your people are scattered on the mountains with no one to gather them.

Nah 3:19 Nothing can heal your wound; your injury is fatal. Everyone who hears the news about you claps his hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?

9. So much for Nahum, now let's see what we can learn from Habakkuk.

Book of Habakkuk

Habakkuk was written by Habakkuk from Judah. The prophet identifies himself with the condition and circumstances of the people of God. It is Habakkuk who wonders why the evil prosper and the righteous suffer. God rebukes him for his self-serving message.

The Author

1. Nothing is known of Habakkuk except what may be inferred from this book which bears his name. He is described as "the prophet," and it is possible, therefore, that he not only had the gift of prophecy but that he was one of a professional group of prophets.

1.1 Certain musical notations to the psalm in chapter three suggest that he may have prophesied in the Temple like the men who are mentioned in 1Ch 25:1.

1Ch 25:1 David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals. Here is the list of the men who performed this service:

1.2 It is precarious to say much about the prophet's character on the basis of his writing. His name seems to derive from a Hebrew root meaning "to embrace." Jerome (fifth century A.D.) stated that the prophet was called "The Embracer," either because of his love for God or because he wrestled with God.

1.3 A rabbinical tradition tells us that Habakkuk was the son of a Shunammite woman. Shunam was a town located seven miles east of Megiddo near Mount Gilboa.

1.4 This is purely fanciful, of course, and unless it be granted that the prophet's name, like that of Jesus, was given in anticipation of his ministry (Mat 1:21), any conjectures as to its meaning, though interesting, are futile.

Mat 1:21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

1.5 Habakkuk is mentioned in the Apocryphal legend of Bel and the Dragon as rescuing Daniel from the lion's den. No credence need be given to this or to certain other traditions which state that Habakkuk fled to Arabia when Jerusalem fell and returned to Palestine after the Babylonian exile. The stories do, however, point to the approximate time in which the prophet ministered.

End Lesson