

Note

Nahum – Part 1 of 1

Era	Characters	Chapters
In the beginning	God created the world.	Genesis 1
Before 4000 BC	Adam & Eve	Gen 1~5
Before 3000 BC	Cain Abel Seth	Gen 4~5
Before 2500 BC	Noah	Gen 5~10
Before 2100 BC	Job Elihu	Job
About 2000 BC Era of Patriarchs	Abraham Isaac & Ishmael Jacob & Esau Joseph	Gen 11~50
About 1500 BC~ 1000 BC Era of prophets	Moses Aaron Joshua	Exo Lev Num Deu
	Joshua	Joshua
	Judges(Othniel Ehud Shamgar Deborah Gideon Tola Jair Jephthah Ibzan Elon Abdon Samson) Abimelech	Judges
	Ruth Boaz Naomi	Ruth
	Eli Samuel Saul David	1 Samuel
About 1000 BC Era of princes	Saul Jonathan David Absalom Solomon	1 Samuel 2 Samuel
	Solomon Jeroboam Rehoboam Ahab Elijah Elisha Jehu	1 kings
	Ahab Hezekiah Manasseh Josiah Elisha Jehu Elijah	2 kings
	Saul David Solomon	1 Chronicles
	Solomon Rehoboam Asa Jehoshaphat Jehoram Joash Hezekiah Josiah	2 Chronicles
About 500 BC Era of priests	Zerubbabel Ezra Nehemiah Haggai Zechariah	Ezra Nehemiah
	Esther Mordecai Haman Ahasuerus	Esther
	Isaiah Ahaz Hezekiah	Isaiah
	Jeremiah Baruch Zedekiah	Jeremiah
	Jeremiah	Lamentation
	Ezekiel	Ezekiel
	Daniel Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar	Daniel
	Hosea	Hosea
	Joel	Joel
	Amos	Amos
	Obadiah	Obadiah
	Jonah	Jonah
	Micah	Micah
	Nahum	Nahum 

Summary

Nahum - Part 1 of 13

Nahum prophesies God's final judgement and anger against Assyria, 150yrs after Jonah preached against Nineveh bringing about their initial repentance from which they had now fallen away.

The plundering imperialistic expansion of Assyria has been replicated down through the centuries right up to colonial times. God hates all forms of oppression and bullying symbolised by this cruel empire.

In the end, the righteous and just God will expose, humiliate and destroy the endless cycle of oppression.

Transcript

Nahum – Part 1 of 1

Today, we come to the book of Nahum. It's a very tiny book, just three chapters. I believe very few Christians have read it. And of those who read it, they're not very sure what is the purpose of this book. Now it looks like Nahum is just attacking the empire of Assyria, predicting their downfall. We heard before that Jonah went to preach to Nineveh. He is the other one who went to Nineveh besides Nahum. Jonah went 150 years before Nahum. And Jonah had an amazing experience there. It showed how merciful God is even to a wicked empire like Assyria. They tortured, plundered, looted, and killed mercilessly, and yet God sent Jonah to them, to preach to them and ask them to turn. And they did. And so, there was repentance for a while, but 150 years later, we see the old Assyrian nature comes up without a new heart. Things don't last very long. Whatever things happen, they take place for a while and then they revert to the oppressive, selfish, heartless heart.

So this time, Nahum is sent 150 years later, and this time, no more forgiveness. Too late! There is a time! There is a time God is slow to anger but at some point, God's anger will erupt. Some people describe it as a simmering anger. God is angry with sin, but it simmers. It's like a boiling pot of water. It just bubbles and when it reaches 100 degrees Centigrade, the water boils over, then you better turn off the fire or everything will spill out. That is like God's anger. It comes to a certain point we don't know when. In water, we know it's 100 degrees C, but with God, we don't know when. And in that long period of hundreds or thousands of years, men say, "God's not doing anything. It's okay, we can sin". It's because they don't understand the character of God. Many Christians are like that, they sin and sin and nothing happens, they're still prospering, and they say, I think this sin is okay though the Bible tells them clearly it's not. And they say, "But God's not doing anything". They don't understand this character of God. So when we see Jonah, and then we see Nahum, this connection, how come at that point, God does such an amazing work in the hearts of the people and the king? He gives them the heart of repentance. But in this case, He said, "No more, I'm not doing anything". He's going to destroy them. So you see when you see sequences of books, like "Oh, Jonah already told them and now Nahum goes back to the same city and

preaches. What's the connection?" There is a huge connection. But if you just practice a hopscotch method of reading, then you don't see these things. So the fullness of God's anger on this horrible empire of Assyria had come. Just like Samaria who worshipped the golden calves for hundreds of years, God didn't do anything. So people said, "It's okay! God is not angry". Minor irritations here and there, some famine and all that, "It's okay, it's natural calamity". Neighbours attacked them. They say, "Well, that's neighbourly competition". Until they were slammed and went to Babylon. The Jews up to today, learnt the lesson. Jews do not recognize Jesus as Messiah but one thing you'll never find a Jew worshipping is an idol. They got cured of idolatry. Never will build a golden calf or anything again. Nothing freaks out a Jew more than an idol. So we see here a very important character of God that you and I must be aware of. God's anger is against sin, any sin. But it is simmering, not boiling over.

Now Nineveh after this, about 50 years later, it was totally annihilated, destroyed. In fact, nobody knew where the ruins were. For hundreds and hundreds of years, they didn't have a clue where it was until about 1800s, some archaeologist, digging around that part of Mesopotamia discovered, "Oh, these are the ruins of Nineveh". It was so annihilated. The Bible predicted it to be a place for wild animals to live in. Actually it is, up to today.

To us, Nahum doesn't ring a bell but you remember the town of Capernaum? Caper-Nahum. Jesus said to Capernaum in the New Testament, "Woe unto you, you don't want to listen to God's word?". "Caper" means village. Village of Nahum. I don't know whether he was born there or not, but it's named after Nahum. Nahum is a well-respected prophet even among the Muslims. His grave, his tomb is somewhere in Mesopotamia, revered by the Muslims.

Now, since it's such a little book, we can go through it like a quick Bible study. And I like Bible study. I like verse by verse actually better than doing book by book, but I am doing the book by book because I think we need to see the connection.

Look at Nahum 1:2

The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries and keeps wrath for His enemies.

Avenging, avenging, vengeance -three times. What does that tell you? That tells you that God hates what the Assyrians are doing. He's going to take revenge. Revenge on what? We will see later. He's a jealous God. Why? Number one, He's jealous for His people. Assyria conquered His people, bullied His people. And I said God is a jealous God. His children are precious to him, "Don't mess with My children. Don't take My children. Don't bully My children". So, God is a jealous God. He is also avenging God. We don't hear that in preaching nowadays. We hear that God is gracious, God is loving, but God is also avenging against wickedness, oppression, etc. So verse 2 is hard on Assyria.

v3 The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty.

(So we see hard judgement, then God's graciousness. We see this style is found in verse 1 and v3)

His way is in whirlwind and storm and the clouds are the dust of His feet.

(He's majestic.)

He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; He dries up all the rivers; Bashan and Carmel wither; the bloom of Lebanon withers. The mountains quake before Him; the hills melt; the earth heaves before Him, the world and all who dwell in it.

(Wow, the majesty of God. So we see how slow he is to anger.)

v6 Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the heat of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire and the rocks are broken into pieces by Him.

v7 The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; He knows those who take refuge in Him.

v8 But with an overflowing flood, He will make a complete end of the adversaries and will pursue His enemies into darkness.

(Can you see the balance of God here? Anger and mercy.)

v9 What do you plot against the LORD? He will make a complete end; trouble will not rise up a second time.

v10 For they are like entangled thorns, like drunkards as they drink; they are consumed like stubble fully dried.

v11 From you came one who plotted evil against the LORD, a worthless counsellor. (How can you plot against the LORD?)

v12 Thus says the LORD, "Though they are at full strength and many, they will be cut down and pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more.

v13 And now I will break his yoke from off you and will burst your bonds apart."

v14. The LORD has given commandment about you: No more shall your name be perpetuated; from the house of your gods, I will cut off the carved image and the metal image. I will make your grave, for you are vile."

Then....

v15. Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace! Keep your feast, O Judah; fulfil your vows, for never again shall the worthless pass through you; he is utterly cut off.

Can you see the strong "punish you", "I will protect you". Punish, then good news coming for you. I hope you see this is the balance that is lacking in our understanding of God, because we choose the verses we like. Who likes the verses of God's anger and vengeance? Very rare. Today, it's almost hard to hear this kind of preaching. Nobody preaches this kind of preaching. So I hope you see here, the need to read this first as poetry. It is poetry. And I'm told this is in some form of acrostic so the Jews can remember this.

In chapter 1, who is God is dealing with? Assyria! God is angry with Assyria. Now, how is He going to fix it?

Let's look at chapter 2.

2:1 The scatterer has come up against you. Man the ramparts; watch the road; dress for battle; collect all your strength.

2:2. For the Lord is restoring the majesty of Jacob as the majesty of Israel, for plunderers have plundered them and ruined their branches.

Why is God angry, so angry with the Assyrians? Because they have plundered His people. What is plundering? Plundering is when you are strong, you go in with your weapons, and you take whatever you want from those weaker than you. The Assyrians were the first world empire, as far as we know, that went around like that. What made Assyria a mighty empire, the mightiest empire of that time was basically their plundering. You say, "What's the business of Assyria?" - Plundering. How did they get wealth? From plunder.

And then we see here in verse 3,

2:3 The shield of his mighty men is red; his soldiers are clothed in scarlet.

This is very amazing. That was the dress of the Babylonians, the military uniform of the Babylonians was red and never before did military people wear red. Red is usually a very attractive colour that women wore. Fancy, but the Babylonian army was dressed in scarlet. This was long before the Babylonians became a power. Babylon was a tiny little place at this time, it was a non-entity. Wearing a scarlet uniform in army was an unthinkable thing but it was predicted.

continuation of v3 The chariots come with flashing metal on the day he musters them; the cypress spears are brandished.

v4 The chariots race madly through the streets; they rush to and fro through the squares; they gleam like torches, they dart like lightning.

v5 He remembers his officers; they stumble as they go, they hasten to the wall; the siege tower is set up.

v6 The river gates are opened; the palace melts away;

v7 its mistress is stripped; she's carried off, her slave girls lamenting, moaning like doves and beating their breasts.

v8 Nineveh is like a pool whose waters run away. (All the people are disappearing, all the armies running away.) "Halt! Halt!" they cry, but none turns back.

v9 Plunder the silver, plunder the gold! There is no end of the treasure or of the wealth of all precious things.

So when the Babylonians went in, you know what? They did exactly as the Assyrians have done, they plundered the wealth of Assyria. It was unbelievable, gold and wealth because Assyria had been looting countries, ravaging, destroying nations, bringing them to absolute poverty. Taking slaves, taking money, taking everything, stripping the land bare. Now the Babylonians come in, and there's plenty of loot there. You say, "all this is so terrible. Thank God, I don't live in those days".

Nahum 2:10-12

Desolate! Desolation and ruin! Hearts melt and knees tremble; anguish is in all loins; all faces grow pale! Where is the lions' den, the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion and lioness went, where his cubs were, with none to disturb? The lion tore enough for his cubs and strangled prey for his lionesses, he filled his caves with prey and its dens with torn flesh.

You see the word, “lion”, “lion”, “lion”? That was a symbol of Assyria. They stripped people, they took anything for their wives and for their kids. People and nations were like toys to them to take and give to their children. So we see here, plunder, plunder.

You say, “Thank God, we don't live in that era”. Well, we do. You know, it never ended, in fact it became worse. The age of colonialism, where every powerful nation who had gunboats, who invented armaments, came and took any country they wanted. They left Europe, they went to Africa, and just took country after country, slave after slave, conquered the countries, colonized almost the entire continent of Africa. Then they colonized almost all of Asia. It was the rare country that was not colonized. What is colonialism? Empire building. Who started empire building? The Assyrians. God liked it? No. God hates oppression. God hates powerful people taking advantage of poor and weak people. God hates smart people taking advantage of less smart people. But it goes on. We lived through the age of colonialism. I was born, singing “God save the Queen”. I don't know why I was doing that. Well, I was told it was the right thing to do. I was told, we are blessed because they came and took us. Filipinos: the Spanish just went in, killed chieftains and took the land and called it the Philippines; named after King Philip. Filipinos were living happily and peacefully there for yons. Now, please don't see this as Assyria. Assyria is just a symbol, it's a symbol of oppression which continues today. And because it is so pervasive, it became so much a part of our history that we thought it was normal. We thought it was acceptable, and worst still, we thought it was good for us. Later we will see how it all works.

So Nahum is not about some remote king. Who is this king? I don't even care about his name. In fact, there's no Assyria now, there's no Nineveh now, what's this got to do with me? Plenty! Except we don't see it because we don't read it. And when we read it, we don't understand it. It's some strange minor prophet, talking about a past issue.

Chapter 3

v1 Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder - no end to the prey!
(I want you to just note the word “lies” here. You plunder, you don't need to lie. Why bother to lie? Lying is quite different from plundering.)

v2 The crack of the whip, the rumble of the wheel, galloping horse and bounding chariot!

v3 Horsemen charging, flashing sword and glittering spear, hosts of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end - they stumble over the bodies! (So, we see a slaughter of Nineveh by the Babylonian Empire.)

v4 And all for the countless whorings of the prostitute, graceful and of deadly charms, who betrays nations with her whorings, and peoples with her charms.

v5 Behold, I am against you, declares the LORD, and will lift up your skirts over your face; and I will make nations look at your nakedness and kingdoms at your shame. I will throw filth at you and treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle. And all who look at you will shrink from you and say, "Wasted is Nineveh who will grieve for her?" Where shall I seek comforters for you?

I hope you're getting to see a little glimpse of the actual sin of empires. They brutalize you, then they seduce you. They lie! They say, "All this brutality is for your good". They charm you, they colonize you and they say, "You know, your ancestors were so stupid. You natives are so ignorant. Be thankful we colonize you. Now, you should thank us for colonizing you". You know, for a prostitute, you pay her to mess your life up. You think she gave you a favour. That's it. That is empires, they come and they not only are cruel to you, they lie. They deceive your brain. They smash your body and they deceive your brain. But God said, "One day, I will lift up your skirts over your face. Make nations look at your nakedness". In other words, all of this covering, looking so nice and good, I will lift up your skirt, show that there's nothing there, you're just filthy, you're just a fake, you're just a liar, you're just an oppressor. I never forget what my dad said to me. My father grew up under the British Empire. He was what I would call a brain-washed colonial person. He looked up to the British as mighty men. He was thankful he was under the protection of the British Empire and thankful to serve under the British. He said to me, "I had a turning point in my life? When the Japanese came, we hated the Japanese. They were little fellows. We were told they were useless by the British. We were told they had tin-can kind of armaments. We were told that Singapore would never fall because the British Empire would never fall. In a few days, Singapore fell. I saw these white men whom I looked up to as my heroes but they were cowards. They just gave up like that. The Japs slapped them. I saw they were just nothing. I woke up and realized they had brainwashed me to believe that they were my protector, they were my hope and I should be thankful to them". This is what God says, "One day I'll lift up the skirt and you know all the pomp and

all that and you see what's underneath - nothing, zero! There's lies". So the Assyrians not only plundered, they made the natives feel so inferior that they were not even human. For many Asians, we actually thought we were sub-human. Why? Brainwashed. This is not anti-colonial talk. This is just Bible talk. We are thankful that we learnt English, I'm thankful that I speak English and thankful for the rule of law, etc. But that doesn't change the fact that : they came, they took the land with a gun, ruled over us and made us feel less than human. We were stupid natives who can't do anything. And we believed it! Please don't see this as a political issue. I have no interest in politics. I'm just interested in seeing what the Bible says.

v8 Are you better than Thebes that sat by the Nile, with water around her, her rampart a sea, and water her wall?

(Thebes is a big city in Egypt. Assyria finally conquered Thebes and became the world power. Thebes is like unconquerable, invincible.)

v9 Cush was her strength; Egypt too, and that without limit; Put and the Libyans were her helpers.

v10 Yet she became an exile; she went into captivity; her infants were dashed in pieces (That's what Assyrians did.) at the head of every street; for her honoured men lots were cast, and all her great men were bound in chains. You also will be drunken; you will go into hiding; you will seek a refuge from the enemy.

(So God is telling the Assyrians, "Thebes thought they will never fall? They fell. You thought you will never (fall)? You will too.)

v12 All your fortresses are like fig trees with first ripe figs - if shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater.

v13 Behold, your troops are women in your midst. The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies; fire has devoured your bars.

(When I read this, it reminds me of the fall of Singapore. The impregnable British fortress – "your troops are women in your midst" - surrendered just like that (snap of a finger) without a fight. "The gates of your land are wide open to the enemies". The Japs marched in and "fire devoured your bars". Brainwashing: Singapore will never fall.

v14 Draw water for the siege; strengthen your forts; go into the clay; tread the mortar; take hold of the brick mold! (Do whatever you want.)

There will the fire devour you; the sword will cut you off. It will devour like the locusts. Multiply yourself like the locusts; multiply like the grasshopper! You increased your merchants more than the stars in the heavens. The locusts spread its wings and flies away. Your princes are like grasshoppers, your scribes like clouds of locusts settling on the fences in a day of cold - when the sun rises, they fly away; no one knows where they are. (The mighty British forces of Singapore, they evaporated on that day and left helpless Singaporeans at the mercy of the Japanese.)

v18 Your shepherds are asleep, O king of Assyria; your nobles slumber. Your people are scattered on the mountains, with none to gather them. There is no easing your hurt; your wound is grievous. All who hear the news about you clap their hands over you. For upon whom has not come your unceasing evil?

End of Nahum. What kind of ending is that? I like these Bible endings; they seemed like no ending here because the Bible is not 66 books with endings. There's one ending, it's called Revelation. A lot of people get very mystified when a Bible book seems to have no ending. Why should it? Why should a chapter have an ending? The chapter leads on! So we see here "for upon whom has not come your unceasing evil?" - question mark, no answer.

What is this whole book about? It is about what we consider the perpetual cycle of human oppression, human violence and human suffering. And you know what? We have been so used to it, that we consider it a normal part of life, acceptable, and believe that God is doing nothing about it. I mean it is part of life. So what's there to get excited? What's there to be angry? See, that is how we've been indoctrinated by the oppressors that you just accept it. It's part of life. And Christianity today, doesn't say a word about oppression. It doesn't do anything to help the oppressed. 99% of Christians think that's none of our business. Let me tell you, God is concerned for the widow, the orphan and the foreigner. In other words, God is concerned for the weak. And if God is concerned, I, as God's child, must be concerned. My Father's business is my business. If He grieves over it, I grieve over it. You're not saved to escape oppression. Today's salvation is: Trust Christ, you go to heaven. Salvation is to be more like Christ. It's what it is. Salvation is: you are saved from destruction, but saved to Christ's likeness. What is Christlikeness? He cares for the weak. God does not ignore the wealthy, no. But Jesus' ministry was always to the weak, to the oppressed. Why? Because the ones up there don't need your help. It's the ones down there who need your help. He was with the crowds, he was with the beggars, the

lepers, the outcasts who were being oppressed. Is this your ministry? Is this your Christianity or is it just going to Bible study week after week? Attending beautiful book series? Listen, listen, listen, is that what Christianity is about? It does appear that way. It does appear Christianity is a very elite religion. Many people say, "Wow, you know, Christians are the rich people, the smart people, the "can-study" people. No! Christians are people who have a heart of Christ, indwelt with Christ and care for the weak. God hates oppression of the weak. Do something about it. Be a voice for the voiceless. Don't take this as normal.

The Bible says in Nahum, God is going to avenge. God will deal. God is very grieved by this. Are you? Are you grieved? So I hope, today, this will be a little lesson for us. It is not about some old, old history, dusty history. Today, right in front of your eyes and my eyes, are people who oppress others. Are you a voice for them? Do you care? Do you lift a finger to help them? One day, God will avenge but today, you do something. This is Christianity.

May God bless you and may the book of Nahum not be a history book, but it will be a guidebook for you. Our beautiful God loves the poor. God bless you.