

# ABIDE

## DISCOVERING YOUR OLD TESTAMENT



### NINEVEH NO MORE

*NAHUM*

Here we run into a situation that we have seen before, and that is that much of the information we would like to know about this prophet of God remains hidden from us. We know his name; Nahum. We know that his name means “Comforter.” We know that he describes himself as an “Elkoshite.” We know what he discloses in his prophecy and that it is anything but “comforting” to those to whom he is writing. Aside from this, we know nothing else of this man and when specifically this message was given.

However, what we do know is that back in the book of Jonah, this prophet was placed in a tremendous amount of trouble with God because of his refusal to preach to the people of Nineveh because he was afraid that God would show them mercy if they repented— and that is exactly what happened. These people repented, came to God, and this absolutely infuriated Jonah. But in Nahum, we find that he was given the job Jonah wanted. Judgment was coming to this nation, and this time, there was nothing that would keep it from happening.

Needless to say, the message of Nahum is not one you would probably like to read right before you go to bed at night; its tones are serious, its message is clear, and its pronouncement is final.

In Jonah, we spoke about the ruthlessness of these Assyrian people towards other nations, and specifically towards the people of Israel. Although there was genuine repentance at one time from these people, it appears they went into a relapse and sunk back into their old ways. It also appears that they suffered from a great deal of pride. They were proud of the size of their city. They were proud of the self-sufficiency of their agricultural production. They were proud of the 12,000 towers they built which were scattered all over the city. They were proud of their one hundred foot walls that were so wide, three chariots could ride side by side together. And apparently, this pride problem had gone on for quite some time, because in the beginning of this prophecy much attention is given, not to the patience of God, but the terrible power and judgment He possesses.

Though these people felt like they were untouchable, and though from the outside looking in by the surrounding nations they looked untouchable, God assured them that this was not the case and that He would bring them down so low that they would experience a defeat so great that they would never recover. These people have experienced the mercy of God, but now, they are doomed to experience the wrath of God.

### *How to Think About Nahum*

Once again, what to have in your mind when you read this book is God's judgment on the people of Nineveh.

**This is What I Will Do... Cause Destruction (Chapter 1):** This chapter details the continual patience of God while this nation took a turn for the worst. It was not simply that they had become complacent in their sin, it was that they continued to get worse and worse, despite the grace that He had shown them.

**My Power Exceeds Your Own (Chapter 1:2-8)**— When God is explaining to these people exactly who He is, we are met with some of the most terrible descriptions of His power in all of the Bible. Verses 3-6 read like this, “The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.”

These are words that cannot be ascribed to anyone except for God. The challenge was thrown down by Nineveh by way of their disobedience, and this is God telling them that He accepts.

**My Punishment Is Absolute (Chapter 1:9-15)**— Here God explains that there would be no way these people would be able to recover from the destruction He would pour out upon them.

**This is How I Will Do It... By Dismantling (Chapter 2):** This section is all about God detailing exactly how He would take this nation apart. God would not only dismantle this people by way of their forces and government, but also by their reputation.

**Their Siege is Described (2:1-10):** An interesting fact can be observed here. Remember once more, that in this writing we are dealing with prophecy, and therefore, in this case, with foretelling. These events have not yet happened, and with this in mind, pay attention to the description God gives regarding their impending invasion in verse 3, “The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet:” God was telling this nation that they would fall, and He further signaled who it was that would be invading. History tells us that the Medes wore red uniforms and carried red shields. These individuals, along with the Babylonians were the ones to bring Nineveh to its knees. And everything happened exactly how God said that it would.

**Their Reputation is Destroyed (2:11-13):** There was an apparent love of lions as the official symbol for these people; we might call this animal their mascot. That is why in these verses you will see the reference made to lions several times. They no doubt believed that they protected their own like lions, were bold and fearsome like a lion, and that it was they who were at the top of the food chain and not to be taunted. However, the question is asked in verse 11, “Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid?” They had lost their courage. They were, in all respects, “cowardly lions” now.

**This is What Others Will Say... Well Done (Chapter 3):** Because of the violence, idolatry, arrogance, and complete disregard for God's mercy and assumption that God would bless regardless, there would be none who would stand up and mourn their fall. In fact, the opposite would be true. Verse 19 says, “There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?” Everyone will look and see what God has brought against this nation and they will all say, “Well done.”

### *What to Look for in Nahum*

#### **Promises—**

**The Promise of God's Goodness:** Chapter 1 and verse 7 has this to say, "The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him." Right there, in the middle of God's pronouncement of judgment, God reminds all of this truth: "I Am good." We will cover this in greater detail in a moment, but God's judgment against evil is part of the way He is good. So let us cause this to enter our minds: All of God's judgments are good.

**The Promise of Peace:** This truth we find in verse 12 of the same chapter "Thus saith the LORD; Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more." Here is a promise to His people Israel that there will be a day when they will not be put under judgment any longer. There will be a day of continual triumph because of the Messiah to come.

It is also important here to remember that there are promises specifically ascribed to Israel as a nation and to those of us in the church age, and here is one of those promises. This is a distinct promise to Israel.

### *What to Gain from Nahum*

**Your Blessings of Yesterday Do Not Cover Your Tomorrow—** Much of the arrogance can no doubt be traced back right here— the assumption that God's past blessings will continue despite what kind of life is chosen. Sometimes this opinion is bolstered because as this person moves further and further away from that line God has specifically drawn and nothing happens, it is believed that 'nothing' will continue to happen. This can even turn into believing that their ability to continue, and sometimes even prosper, is evidence that God is not against them, he is actually for them.

When God gave them the prophet Jonah, and repentance was experienced, they began to believe that once was enough. But God's blessings do not work this way. There are new mercies, there is new grace to be had, and there is new direction and power to be provided, but this newness comes with the newness of each day. That each new day given is an opportunity to receive new blessing by living in the presence of God, not apart from it.

**A Lack of Repentance Bring About the Other Side of God's Goodness—** What is meant by this is that all of the positive experiences we can enjoy with God because of His goodness through repentance truly is wonderful, but the other side of God's goodness that exists because of His judgment against a lack of repentance is truly terrible.

When we look at God's true holiness, we have to come to grips with the fact that because of this, He must judge sin. God is love, yes. That is part of His goodness. But God is also holy and cannot allow sin to ultimately continue, and therefore, it must be judged. This is also part of God's goodness. His love and justice are two sides of the same coin as far as His goodness is concerned. If God allowed murder, pedophilia, theft, lying, and the host of other sins against His character to go unpunished, He would not be good.

So we rejoice in God's goodness that provides mercy to those who will turn toward Him, and we tremble at God's goodness as it brings ultimate justice against those who refuse.



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