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THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

OLD TESTAMENT

BOOK 34

NAHUM



Pophet Nahum, Amiens Cathedral

SUMMARY

The author of the Book of Nahum identifies himself as Nahum (in the Hebrew “Consoler” or “Comforter”) the Elkoshite. There are many theories as to where that city was though there is no conclusive evidence. One such theory is that it refers to the city later called Capernaum (which literally means “the village of Nahum”) at the Sea of Galilee.

Given the limited amount of information that we know about Nahum, the best we can do is narrow the timeframe in which the Book of Nahum was written to between 663 and 612 B.C.

Two events are mentioned that help us to determine these dates. First, Nahum mentions Thebes (No Amon) in Egypt falling to the Assyrians (663 B.C.) in the past tense, so it had already happened. Second, the remainder of Nahum's prophecies came true in 612 B.C.

Nahum did not write this book as a warning or “call to repentance” for the people of Nineveh. God had already sent them the prophet Jonah 150 years earlier with His promise of what would happen if they continued in their evil ways.

The people at that time had repented but now lived just as bad if not worse than they did before. The Assyrians had become absolutely brutal in their conquests (hanging the bodies of their victims on poles and putting their skin on the walls of their tents among other atrocities).

Now Nahum was telling the people of Judah to not despair because God had pronounced judgment and the Assyrians would soon be getting just what they deserved.

Nineveh once had responded to the preaching of Jonah and turned from their evil ways to serve the Lord God. But 150 years later, Nineveh returned to idolatry, violence, and arrogance.

Once again God sends one of His prophets to Nineveh warning of judgment in the form of the destruction of their city and exhorting them to repentance. Sadly, the Ninevites did not heed’s Nahum’s warning, and the city was brought under the dominion of Babylon.

Chapter 1: The burden against Nineveh. God is jealous, angry and vengeful. The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He knows those who trust in Him, the mountains quake before Him, and the hills melt.

A wicked counselor amongst you plots evil against the Lord. Though the enemy seem safe and many, yet the Lord will afflict them. The Lord will cut off idols, and dig your grave, for you are vile. O Judah, keep your appointed feasts.

Chapter 2: An ironic call to battle is made. The Lord will restore the excellence of Jacob. Chariots rage in the streets, but ultimately, the Assyrians are led away captive. Assyria drains away like a pool of water. Where is the dwelling of the lions? The Lord will burn the Assyrians’ chariots in smoke.

SUMMARY Continued

Chapter 3: Woe to the bloody city! There is a further description, as in chapter 2, of the chaotic bustle of battle. Nineveh is punished because of its harlotries and sorceries. Nineveh's nakedness will be shown to the nations. As the Assyrians destroyed No Amon (Thebes) in Egypt, so Assyria itself will be destroyed and humiliated.

As ripe figs fall from a shaken tree, so will the strongholds of Nineveh fall before the judgment of God. The inhabitants of Nineveh are as numerous as locusts, but destruction shall still ensue, and all who hear of Nineveh's defeat shall clap their hands.

NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

1:7 The Lord is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble; And He knows those who trust in Him.

1:15 Behold, on the mountains The feet of him who brings good tidings, Who proclaims peace! O Judah, keep your appointed feasts, Perform your vows. For the wicked one shall no more pass through you; He is utterly cut off.

BIBLE TIMELINE

697 BC

The Vision of Nahum

Nahum 1 - 3

CHARACTER Definitions

NAHUM - The only mention in Scripture of Nahum the Elkoshite occurs in the first verse of his own book. While scholars have proposed a number of theories about Nahum's hometown, Elkosh, the best option identifies it with a city in southern Judah that later came to be known as Elcesi, near where the prophet Micah lived.

Nahum's prophecy against the city of Nineveh would have been significant for the people of Judah, who would have needed encouragement in the face of the terrifying power of the Assyrian Empire.

The book of Nahum mentions the recent fall of No-Amon, or Thebes, which occurred in 663 BC, as well as the coming destruction of Nineveh, which happened in 612 BC. But when, during this more than fifty-year period, did Nahum preach?

The Assyrian Empire, which had its capital at Nineveh, was at its most powerful in the first half of this period, having a stranglehold on Judah during King Manesseh's reign. Also, while the book of Nahum mentions the destruction of Thebes, it does not mention its reconstruction, which took place in 654 BC.

This leads us to date Nahum's prophecy between the years of 663 and 654 BC. Nahum preached during the reign of King Manesseh, one of the most evil kings in Judah's long history, a man who needed the pain of his own experience to teach him the lessons of being a good king.

CHARACTERS Continued

Commentator J. Barton Payne suggests that Manasseh's great conversion took place late in his reign, around 648 BC, six years before his death. That means Nahum preached during the darkest period in Judah's history to that point, a time filled with idolatry of all kinds in a nation that had completely turned its back on God.

The Lord's willingness to send Nahum, whose name means "comfort," into such a hopeless situation evidences His unrelenting and overwhelming grace. Nahum's singular focus on the impending judgment of Nineveh offers a continuation of the story that began in Jonah.

Sometime around 760 BC, God sent Jonah to Nineveh to preach repentance and hope to the Assyrian people, a message they heard and adopted—at least for a time. One hundred years later, during the time of Nahum, the Assyrians had returned to their bullish ways, conquering the northern kingdom of Israel and lording their power over Judah in the south.

Jonah failed to realize what Nahum reminded the people of Judah: God's justice is always right and always sure. Should He choose to grant mercy for a time, that good gift will not compromise the Lord's ultimate sense of justice for all in the end.

After allowing approximately two hundred years of powerful Assyrian kings and rulers, God announced through Nahum His plans to judge the city of Nineveh.

While the book clearly shows God's concern over sin, His willingness to punish those guilty of wickedness, and His power to carry out His desire for judgment, it also contains rays of hope shining through the darkness.

Most significant, the people of Judah would have immediately taken hope in the idea that Nineveh, their primary oppressor for generations, would soon come under judgment from God.

Also, a small but faithful remnant in an increasingly idolatrous Judah would have been comforted by declarations of God's slowness to anger, His goodness and strength, and His restorative power.

No doubt we all have felt overwhelmed by the darkness both within ourselves and in our world. Nahum lived in a dark time, a time in which the faithful few must have wondered how long they would have to resist cultural and spiritual compromise.

Have you ever found your will to do what's right weakening as you became discouraged with what you saw in your life and in the world around you? The prophet Nahum reminds us of God's active hand, working even in the darkest of times to bring justice and hope throughout the world.

MAP REFERENCES

Nahum

Nahum lived about 2600 years ago. He was a native of Elkosh (about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem). The Bible's book of Nahum is short in length and consists almost entirely of a prophecy of Nineveh's destruction. Nahum explains that because of Assyria's pride and cruelty in their destruction of Israel, and because of their idolatry, treachery, superstition, and injustice, their empire would be destroyed as punishment. In 612 BC (about 2600 years ago), a coalition of Babylonians, Scythians and Medes conquered Nineveh.

As we can see today, Nahum was right. Nineveh was never again a world power. And today, it is little more than an archaeological site. In contrast, Israel is again a nation, and a relatively prosperous one at that.

God's holiness, justice and power are the foundation of the Nahum's prophetic book.

Nahum, means "Comforted". His book is the seventh of the twelve minor prophets.