

NAHUM - SHORT VERSION

Historical context. Nahum was a pre-exilic prophet who preached in the years prior to the fall of Nineveh, capital of Assyria, in 612 BC. Nahum's singular preoccupation was the upcoming destruction of Nineveh. In his introduction to the book, Peter Craigie writes:

This is not a tasteful or easy to read book due to its violent language. In order to understand its force and power, one must first attempt to enter Nahum's world.

Just as Nazi Germany still evokes the images of terror in the minds of those Jewish people who survived the holocaust, so too in Nahum's world Assyria was the embodiment of human evil and terror. Of all the oppressive imperial powers that have stained the pages of human history from the past to the present, Assyria claims a place of pre-eminence among evil nations. It was a nation with a long history, but during the first millennium B.C. it embarked upon a path of imperial expansion which knew no limitations of human decency and kindness. And among the many nations that experienced Assyria's cruelty, its invasion of territory and its ruthless military methods, the small state of Judah was but one. (The Daily Study Bible Series, Twelve Prophets, p.59)

In Nahum's time, Israel (Northern Kingdom) has been destroyed by the Assyrians, and Judah (Southern Kingdom) has suffered many attacks. So if Nahum sings and celebrates Nineveh's upcoming destruction, we can see why. He is regarded as one of the most eloquent orators in the Bible. Like Hosea, Nahum projects human emotions unto God, but unlike Hosea, he does not discriminate which emotions are worthy of God. One of the unique features of the book is that his total focus is on another nation, and not on Israel

Message. In the end, there will be judgment and punishment for those who do evil. Even though Isaiah and Micah see the Assyrians as God's instrument in punishing the infidelity of Israel and Judah, that does not mean that Assyria will not receive punishment for its sins.

Suggested text to read

2:2 – “A jealous and avenging God is the Lord.”

The reader is encouraged to read my commentary on this disturbing verse.