

PREPARATION FOR LESSON: read the book of Nahum**BACKGROUND**

Author: Nahum, a contemporary of Zephaniah

Date and Place of Ministry: He taught some 20 years in Judah from 655 - 635 BC.

He was born, raised and had his first years of ministry in the underground.

He wrote his book c. 648 BC...

...when Ashur-banipal is king of the Assyrian empire. 669-626 BC 1:12; 2:13

...when Judah is under Assyria, during the time of king Manasseh. 697 - 642 BC 1:13

...after Thebes, capital of southern Egypt, had fallen in 663 BC. 3:8-10

...before Thebes is rebuilt in 645 BC.

Theme: Fall of Nineveh

Purposes: To show God's justice and holiness.

To encourage Judah that God would be her refuge in the midst of crisis and trouble.

Scripture background: 2 Kings 21:1-18; 2 Chronicles 33:1-20

OUTLINE**Nineveh will fall**

The Fact 1

The Method 2-3

The Reason 3

HISTORICAL SETTING**In Assyria**

Politically: Assyria had been a world power for over 200 years, since 885 BC.

Assyria is at the height of her power under Ashur-banipal. 669 - 626 BC

The king knows his empire is secure, in control of that entire part of the world.

He therefore has time to build more palaces and develop a library with over 10,000 volumes.

Spiritually: Nineveh had repented under Jonah in the 700's BC (100 yrs. before Nahum).

Now she boasts of her strength and security Zephaniah 2:15; she is once again cruel and inhumane.

Nineveh has changed from repentance to wickedness. Nahum 3

In Judah

Politically: Manasseh became king of Judah. He killed thousands who followed God.

God allowed Assyria to control Judah and take the king to Babylon as prisoner for about 4 years.

During that time he genuinely repented; Assyria lets him return to Jerusalem as a vassal king.

Spiritually: When Manasseh returns to Jerusalem, he gets rid of the idols and tells the people to serve Yahweh.

Judah has changed from wickedness to repentance. cf. 2 Chron. 33:12-19

DEFINITIONS about God

God is jealous means *zealous* or *committed*. God is committed to what is right, fair and good.

God's anger, wrath is God's response to evil, disobedience or injustice; God's judgment.

God's vengeance means *justice*; the Greek word for *vengeance* means *that which brings justice*.

Because Jews use extreme words for non-extreme meanings, this is 1:2 paraphrased for our Western thinking.

The Lord is committed to what is right. He is a just God. The Lord brings justice and responds to disobedience.

The Lord brings justice on His foes and responds to the evil of His enemies.

DEVELOPED OUTLINE

Chpt. 1 The Fact Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, will fall; the empire will be destroyed by God.

His **justice** will be certain and severe.

His **power** will be displayed thru nature.

His **destruction** will be quick and complete, like dry thorns and stubble.

His **consolation** is for Judah; Assyria, her enemy will be destroyed.



DEVELOPED OUTLINE continued

Chpt. 2 The Method: how it will happen. Nahum writes this 36 years before Nineveh was destroyed.

- The city will be attacked by soldiers with red shields and jackets, riding in chariots.
- The river gates will be forced open with a flood; the palace burned with fire; the city guards will desert.
In all the time of Nineveh's existence, the river had never flooded; God used nature to bring her down.
- Silver and gold will be taken; its location will be unknown. (From 612 BC to 1843 AD no one could find Nineveh).
- The city will be destroyed like Thebes which had 25 miles of wall and moats, but was conquered.

Description of Nineveh

It was built on the east side of a branch of the Tigris River.

It was surrounded by 8 miles of 50 foot high walls, wide enough that 3 chariots could ride side by side.

Fifteen gates led into the city; a branch of the river ran thru the city and was controlled by river gates.

Outside the wall there were moats 150 feet wide, filled with water.

Fulfillment as recorded by Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian from the 1st century BC.

There was a prophecy (prediction) that Nineveh should not be taken till the river became an enemy of the city. And in the 3rd year of the siege, the river, being swollen with continuous rains, overflowed every part of the city and broke down the wall for 20 furlongs (2½ miles); then the king, thinking that the oracle was fulfilled and the river had become an enemy to the city, built a large funeral pyre (fire) in the palace and collecting together all his wealth and his concubines and eunuchs, burnt himself and the palace with them all and the enemy entered at the breach that the waters had made and took the city.

(*Bibliotheca Historica* Vol. 1; 2:26-27 taken from *Barnes Notes, Minor Prophets* 2:122)

Chpt. 3 The Reason: why it will happen.

vs. 1 Murder, bloodshed and warfare with barbarous practices; broken promises and treaties.

She became rich thru stealing, looting and taking by force.

vs. 4 Harlotry - literal immorality,

but she also seduced nations into treaties; she promised freedom but then enslaved them.

She seduced people to the metropolis with luxury, wealth and pleasure.

vs. 19 Endless cruelty for over 70 years until now; there is no more opportunity to repent.

Nineveh and the Assyrian empire will be totally destroyed. It happened in 612 BC, 36 years later.

APPLICATION

When there is excessive evil, there will be chaos, destruction and sorrow that affects the lives of everyone.

In these days we are living in the midst of evil. Nationally, locally or in our own personal lives, things seem to be speeding up and happening so fast. We barely resolve one problem and two more arise. Very quickly it can become overwhelming. This is when we need Nahum's words of comfort and encouragement.

The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble; He cares for those who trust in Him. 1:7

Nahum wants us to remember 3 facts about God.

God is **good**. In this context it means,

He cannot make a mistake; He knows my situation; He has the power to change it or take me thru it.

God is our **refuge** – our shelter in the time of storms.

He can protect us from doubt or despair; from Satan's attacks.

He can comfort us in our sorrow.

He can give us security and support in our time of helplessness.

He can pour out His love in our loneliness.

As our refuge, He has everything we need.

God **cares**. He cares about us, about our suffering, injustice or turmoil.

We can be assured He will respond. He will always be there, even when we cannot feel His presence.

