

Every Sunday evening at [Bible Explorer](#) we will explore the question

'What does this book from the Bible mean for us today?'

Author: The author of the Book of Nahum identifies himself as Nahum (the Hebrew means "Consoler" or "Comforter") the Elkoshite (1:1). There are many theories as to where Elkosh 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. Others claim there was an Elkosh 20 miles north of Nineveh, and that Nahum was one of the Israelite captives.

Date of Writing: Given the limited amount of information that we know about Nahum, the best we can do is narrow the timeframe to between 663 and 612 B.C. He was an early contemporary of Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah. Nineveh, and the Assyrian Empire, was at its height of power. Two events are mentioned that help us to determine dates. Firstly, Nahum mentions Thebes (No Amon) in Egypt falling to the Assyrians (663 B.C.) in the past tense, so it had already happened (Ch 3 v. 8). Thebes was just as strategically located as Nineveh, supported by powerful auxiliaries, and was the capital of a proud empire, yet had within recent memory fallen before the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal. Secondly, the remainder of Nahum's prophecies came true in 612 B.C. when the Babylonians and the Medes utterly destroyed the city, so that until 1845 its existence was questioned. (Sir Austen Henry Layard identified the location.)

Purpose of Writing: 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 lives that were just as bad if not worse than 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 what they deserved.

The message of Nahum is expressed in some of the most powerful and impassioned poetry that is known in the Old Testament. It can be summed up in the good news of 1:15: *Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, Judah, and fulfil your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed.*

The oracle concerning Nineveh begins with a hymn which is very general in its adoration of the jealous wrath, the avenging might and the reliable goodness of the Lord. Not until verse 11 does the Assyrian power come into view. The hymn is also markedly traditional in its language and imagery; almost every turn of its powerful poetry can be paralleled from the prophets and poets of Israel. It is as if the prophet were drawing on the hymn book of his people, using the language of their fathers to express the prayer and praise of today's faith. To predict the fall of Nineveh must have seemed to Nahum's contemporaries, perhaps even to Nahum himself as a piece of folly or, at best, wishful thinking. How was this tight-knit imperial organization, with its vast political and military resources, and this city, with its impregnable fortifications, to be overthrown? The answer is given to all men of little faith in these words: God is in control and will act.



Key Verses:

[Nahum 1:7](#), "The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him."

[Nahum 1:14a](#). "The LORD has given a command concerning you, Nineveh: 'You will have no descendants to bear your name.'"

[Nahum 1:15a](#), "Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace!" See also [Isaiah 52:7](#) and [Romans 10:15](#).

[Nahum 2:13a](#), "Behold I am against you," says the Lord of hosts."

[Nahum 3:19](#), "Nothing can heal your wound; your injury is fatal. Everyone who hears the news about you claps his hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?"

What would Prophet Nahum say to us if he were still alive today?

1. The universality of God's Kingdom is sure.
2. Don't take God's patience and grace for granted.
3. Build your house upon the Rock (God) because all other grounds are sinking sand.
4. Watch out for signs of pride. Pride comes before a fall.
5. Trust in God even when you see so much of terrorism and wickedness in this world today.
6. Be an encourager today to someone who needs comfort.
7. The name of Nahum agrees with his message, for his message is a comfort to the child of God who endures suffering. The message of Nahum says "Yes" to the question "Does God care?"

Think of situations, personal or global:

1. Where God seems to be taking a long time to execute justice
2. Where you have doubts as to whether God really cares
3. Where people seem oblivious to the fact that they are making God angry
4. Where someone needs encouraging to persevere in their service for God
5. Where God's message seems totally at odds with society's thinking
6. Where the Church needs to pull together to pray for God's wisdom

Discuss and pray in groups