

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

In this lesson, we continue our survey of the Old Testament and our third week of looking at the Minor Prophets. Our study this week will continue the study of the remaining three prophets of Judah: Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk. From our study of Nahum, we will learn much about the Assyrians, their capital city Nineveh, and the sure and certain judgment that God brings which precisely fulfills all of Nahum's prophecies.

While all three of these prophets warned of coming judgments, all three also brought messages of comfort and assurance that God was in control. As such, in this lesson, we will consider Nahum's message of comfort to the Jews regarding the defeat of their enemies.

In our next lesson, we will look at Zephaniah's message of God's protection of Judah from harm in the coming days of His judgment; we will also examine Habakkuk's questioning of God regarding all of the injustices in the world. Although these books were written well over two thousand years ago; their messages, their insight, and their comfort are still very much relevant today.

For our study today, let's consider the city of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. John Walvoord writes about the Assyrians in The (Old Testament) Bible Knowledge Commentary pertinent to the book of Nahum: "Nineveh was the capital of one of the most cruelest, vilest, most powerful, and most idolatrous empires in the world. For example, writing of one of his conquests, Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) boasted, 'I stormed the mountain peaks and took them. In the midst of the mighty mountain I slaughtered them; with their blood I dyed the mountain red like wool...The heads of their warriors I cut off, and I formed them into a pillar over against their city; their young men and their maidens I burned in the fire.' Regarding one captured leader, he wrote, 'I flayed [him], his skin I spread upon the wall of the city.'"

Now consider, approximately one hundred and fifty years after Jonah's call to repentance, what God says to this great city through the Prophet Nahum.

For this lesson, read the book of Nahum and consider the following questions:

1. Nahum and Jonah had at least one thing in common. Can you identify it?
 - a. ANSWER: They were both sent to prophesy to the Assyrians, and in particular to the capital city of Assyria, Nineveh.
2. What can we learn about Nineveh from the following verses?
 - a. Genesis 10:8-12
 - i. ANSWER: Nineveh was one of the many cities built by Nimrod "the mighty hunter".
 - b. 2 Kings 18:17-37
 - i. ANSWER: The Assyrians bring a great army and demand Jerusalem surrender to them; they even lie about God having sent them. When the people of Jerusalem fail to surrender, the Assyrians begin to lay siege to the city.
 - c. 2 Kings 19:32-36
 - i. ANSWER: God protected Jerusalem from the Assyrians. The siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians failed when God defeated their army, and "the angel of the LORD" slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night.
 - d. Ezekiel 32:22-23
 - i. ANSWER: Total destruction is prophesied for Assyria.

3. How did Jonah describe Nineveh? (see Jonah 4:11)
 - a. ANSWER: He described it as a "great city" with 120,000 people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well.
 4. How did Nahum describe the same city? (see Nahum 3:1 and 3:19)
 - a. ANSWER: He described it as the "city of blood" and a city that inflicted "endless cruelty".
 5. When God brought judgment on Nineveh, how was it possible that this great city was so easily overtaken? (see Nahum 1:8, 2:6 and 2:8)
 - a. ANSWER: By flooding either a river that was located nearby, or the Khosr River which ran directly through it, the historical record is not clear as to which of these flooded initially causing the flood that brought down Nineveh's defenses.
 6. What else did Nahum prophesy about the destruction of Nineveh? (see Nahum 1:10, 2:13, and 3:15)
 - a. ANSWER: He prophesied that Nineveh would be destroyed by fire -- and it was, as archaeologists have since discovered.
 7. Just before the attack, in the final hours, what does Nahum prophesy about the physical condition of the people of Nineveh? (see Nahum 1:10 and 3:11)
 - a. ANSWER: He prophesied that they would be drunk, which according to historical records is exactly what happened.
 8. What does Nahum prophesy about the results of the attack, in terms of a death toll? (see Nahum 3:3)
 - a. ANSWER: He prophesied a massacre of great proportions. In fact, historical records indicate that the death toll was so massive that because of the bleeding bodies, the "flowing stream, mingled with their blood, changed its color for a considerable distance." (Walvoord)
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So, we see from this study that God's judgments are sure and swift, and that Biblical prophecy can consistently be trusted as an accurate reflection of God's Holy Word and His divine will. If God can bring down a nation as large and as evil as Assyria so quickly, we know that He can protect us and will judge those who strive to defeat His kingdom and His sovereign plans.

Have a great week everyone, and thanks for studying with us!

In Christ,

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