

Lesson 5 - Nahum

Nahum prophesied sometime between 663 and 613 BC. He referred to the conquest of Thebes (3:9-10), which occurred in 663, and his prophecy concerned the fall of Nineveh, which occurred in 612. There is no information in the book to further narrow down the date. This means that Nahum was contemporary with Manasseh, Amon, or Josiah. Another view places Nahum earlier, proposing that he also prophesied the fall of Thebes rather than referring to it as a past event.

Nineveh was a very ancient city, established by Noah's great-grandson, Nimrod (Gen. 10:6-11). King Sennacherib made Nineveh the capital of Assyria in 705 BC. Jonah was sent to preach to the city. The people repented, and God did not destroy it. However, it eventually returned to its sinful ways. Prophets foretold the fall of Nineveh and Assyria (Zeph. 2:13-15; Isa. 10:12-19; Zech. 10:11). The Assyrians were known for their cruelty and violence, both in conquest and at home.

Assyria's decline happened in several stages. First was the successful revolt of Babylon in 626 BC. Next was the Median invasion and conquest of Asshur in 614 BC. Then, in 612 BC, a Medo-Babylonian alliance besieged Nineveh for three months and destroyed it. It was never rebuilt. The Assyrian King, Sin-shar-ishkun, died in the fall of Nineveh, reportedly by suicide. His brother, Ashur-uballit II, succeeded him and escaped to establish Harran as the new capital. Medo-Babylonian forces conquered Harran in 609 BC, an event considered by historians as the official end of the Assyrian Empire. The remaining Assyrian forces retreated to Carchemish. Shortly after, Egypt attempted to help the Assyrians retake Harran, but they failed. A final battle was fought at Carchemish in 605 BC: Egypt & Assyria vs. Babylon & Media. This resulted in a decisive victory for Babylon & Media. The Assyrian Empire was divided between the victors, with Babylon ruling the West and Media ruling the East. The ruins of Nineveh were first excavated in the 1840s AD.

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1. What prophet was sent to Nineveh a century or so before Nahum's prophecy?
2. Note a few of the encouraging and frightening qualities of God listed in ch. 1.
3. To whom did the "one who plotted evil against the LORD" probably refer?
(Nahum 1:9, 11; 2 Kings 18:28-35)
4. What was the "good news," and to whom was it addressed? (Nahum 1:15)
5. What metaphor from the animal kingdom was used to describe Assyria's violent conquests? (Nahum 2:11-13)
6. What sin was especially emphasized in God's charges against Nineveh?
(Nahum 2:12; 3:1, 19)
7. What other sins are mentioned in Nahum's prophecy?
8. Why might the fall of Thebes (No-Amon) have been an especially appropriate reference for the Assyrians? (Nahum 3:8-10)
9. How would Nineveh fall? (Nahum 3:14)
10. How would other nations react to news of Assyria's fall? (Nahum 3:19)
11. What became of Nineveh after its fall? Was it rebuilt?
12. The Greek historian, Xenophon, passed through the area c. 400 BC, about two centuries after the fall of Nineveh. How did he describe the site?