

Minor Prophets #7 NAHUM

HOSEA took a faithless wife And spoke of judgement, love and life
JOEL told of locust plagues The Spirit and the end of the age
AMOS left his flocks and trees To call the nation to its knees
OBADIAH prophesied of Edom and its foolish pride
JONAH tried to run away, but lived to preach another day
MICAH spoke of God's great plan to change the world by changing man.
NAHUM showed that God is great And prophesied Assyria's fate.

Read: Nahum 1:1-8, 15

- The man who preached the night I was converted was a wonderful children's evangelist named Alex Brown,. He used to call his trailer 'Nahum' because, he said, 'It always follows My-car.'
- As a youth I was excited because I was told that 2:3 was a prophecy about British redcoat soldiers and that 2:4 referred to modern busy city traffic
- Later, when I read the whole book I realised it was actually a prophecy against Assyria declaring its destruction and doom

Some of what we know about the Assyrians comes from the Shalmanesar pillar, a replica of which used to stand in Wesley Mission.

The Assyrians

- Were fierce, cruel warriors
- Used chariots more than others before them and made weapons of (hard) iron rather than (softer) bronze
- Kings had the palace garden decorated with skulls
- Alcoholism and prostitution were widespread
- In Nahum's day they had already conquered Israel (Samaria) – eg King Jehu of Israel is seen on the pillar paying tribute to Shalmaneser (858-824 BC)

Doom and destruction

See Nah 1:9, 14; 2:1; 3:15, 19

- Nahum foretold their doom and utter destruction
- The empire was destroyed in 612 BC
- 300 years later the armies of Alexander marched over its ruins now buried by sand and did not even know it was there. It was not rediscovered till 1845.

How great is our God

Nahum appears to say contradictory things about God

- Jealous (1:2)
- Avenging (1:2, 3, 6)
- Slow to anger (1:3)
- Great in power (1:3)
- Good (1:7)
- Refuge (1:7)

1. God is a jealous God (1:2)

- Jealous can mean suspicious, fearful etc
- But also = vigilant in maintaining or guarding something; intolerant of rivalry (Macquarie)
- God's jealousy is usually declared in the context of idolatry: he will have no other god but himself
- See Ex 34:14; Deut 4:24; Josh 24:19
- In the same way, my wife is jealous over me and I am jealous over her. We both want the best for each other but we will not tolerate any rival.
- C S Lewis: 'Of all powers, love forgives most but condones least; he is pleased with little but demands all.' (*Problem of Pain*, 34)

2. God is an avenging God (1:2)

- Sounds harsh but means God will deal with sin
- Both the OT and the NT talk of God's wrath
- *John the Baptist* – Matt 3:7
- *Jesus* – John 3:36
- *Paul* – Rom 1:18; Eph 5:6; Col 3:6; 1 Thess 1:10;
- *John* – Rev 6:16-17; 12:14-19; 19:15
- When Christ comes again he will come in power and great glory

3. God is slow to anger (1:3)

- The other side of the coin
- God's anger is not easily aroused
- Psalm 103:8-9
- Thank God he gives us a long rope – ultimately he will pull us in and bring us down but he is very patient and longsuffering and slow to anger
- This is why a minister who falls into immorality, for example, may sometimes continue to minister successfully for a long time: but ultimately God will bring him down.

4. God is great in power (1:3-5)

- God is omnipotent
- Nothing can stand against Him
- He has power to destroy and power to create

5. God is Good (1:7)

- If God is not fundamentally good we have no need of Him
- Only a good God is sufficient for us
- Only Christianity presents a God who is truly good
- Even the judgements of God are ultimately good
- Compare destroying a cancer: rampant cells are killed so that we might live
- Romans 8:28
- See Psalm 136 where both deliverance and judgement are seen as displays of God's goodness: it is the ultimate end that is important.
- Ultimately, justice is done and all wrongs are righted.
- See the first chapter of B.Chant, *Walking with a Limp* (Open Book, 2002) for a discussion of the question of God's goodness in the face of human suffering.

6. God is a refuge (1:6-7)

- Refuge = safe place in a time of trouble
- The God who destroys is the same God who saves
- Psalm 46:1

7. Good News (1:15)

With every message from God there is always a promise of good news and peace –

- Peace to Israel (Isaiah 52:7)
- Peace to Judah (Nahum 1:15)
- Peace to the world (Rom 10:15)
- Peace to you and me (John 14:27)

Finally...

- The ultimate expression of God's wrath and God's love is seen in Christ
- Jesus bore our sin to satisfy God's justice (Romans 3:23-25)
- Jesus bore our sin to satisfy God's love (1 John 4:10)
- Will you trust him with your life today?

SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUT

Remember: You don't have to answer all the questions. Choose those that seem most relevant at this time.

Read: Nahum

Biblical

1. Why did God denounce Nineveh (the capital city of Assyria)? See 1:14; 2:12; 3:1, 4, 16.
2. Describe the weapons and tactics used by the Babylonians and others when they conquered Nineveh. (See chapters two and three.) What kind of suffering do you think these practices caused? What does this tell us about the nature of war?
3. One of the symbols of Assyrian power was the lion. Which verses in chapter two seem to relate to this and how?
4. What sort of a person do you think Nahum was? Give reasons.
5. How do you think the people of Judah felt when they heard Nahum's prophecy? Why? (1:12, 15)

Personal and practical

6. What are the implications for you that God is a jealous God? (1:2)
7. When have you been glad that the Lord is slow to anger (1:3) and why?
8. How have you been able to prove in our own experience that God is good? (1:7) Give examples.
9. In what ways has the Lord been a refuge (a place of safety) for you? (1:7)
10. Which of the attributes of God mentioned by Nahum means the most to you personally? Why?

Prayer: Think about the attributes of God mentioned by Nahum and give thanks for them one by one.

About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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