

Notes & Outlines

NAHUM
HABAKKUK

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NAHUM

WRITER: Nahum

“Nahum” means *comforter*. He is identified (Nahum 1:1) as an Elkoshite. This is all that is known of the writer of this book. Elkosh was a city in Assyria, a few miles north of the ruins of Nineveh. Nahum could well have lived there and have prophesied to Nineveh, as Daniel did to Babylon later on. The most likely explanation, however, is that there was a village by this name in Galilee. Jerome recorded that a guide pointed out to him such a village as the birthplace of Nahum — but this was a millennium after Nahum lived. Dr. John D. Davis gives the meaning for “Capernaum” as *the village of Nahum*. If “Capernaum” is a Hebrew word, then this is the evident origin.

TIME:

There are many dates assigned to this book and this prophet. Dates are given anywhere from 720 to 636 B.C. by conservative scholars. It seems reasonable to locate him about 100 years after Jonah and about 100 years before the destruction of Nineveh — between 660 and 612 B.C. He probably lived during the reign of Hezekiah and saw the destruction of the Northern Kingdom.

THEME: The burden (judgment) of Nineveh (Nahum 1:1).

MESSAGE:

Nahum sounds the death-knell of Nineveh and pronounces judgment, by total destruction, on Assyria. God was just in doing this. Jonah, almost a century before, had brought a message from God, and Nineveh had repented. However, the repentance was transitory, and God patiently gave this new generation opportunity to repent (Nahum 1:3). The day of grace ends, and the moment of doom comes (Nahum 3:19). Assyria had served God’s purpose (Isaiah 10:5) and would be destroyed. The destruction of Nineveh, according to the details which are given in this written prophecy, is almost breathtaking.

This is a message of comfort to a people who live in fear of a powerful and godless nation. God will destroy any godless nation.

Some folk think *Nahum* should be called *Ho-hum!* However,

Nahum is a thrilling book to study. It reveals the other side of the attributes of God. God is love, but God is holy and righteous and good.

OUTLINE:

- I. Justice and goodness of God, Chapter 1:1-8**
- II. Justice and goodness of God demonstrated in decision to destroy Nineveh and to give the gospel, Chapter 1:9-15**
- III. Justice and goodness of God exhibited in execution of His decision to destroy Nineveh, Chapters 2, 3**
 - A. Annihilation of Assyria, Chapter 2
 - B. Avenging action of God justified, Chapter 3

COMMENT:

I. Justice and goodness of God, Chapter 1:1-8

v. 1 — Nineveh was the capital of ancient Assyria. About 100 years before Nahum, Jonah preached in Nineveh, and the city turned to God. In Nahum's day the city had turned again from God, but Nahum did not go there. Jonah reveals the love of God; Nahum reveals the justice of God. Nahum issues the sentence of God upon a godless and sinful civilization (see notes on Jonah).

“Burden” is *judgment* (see Isaiah 13).

v. 2 — “Jealous,” according to Webster, means *exacting exclusive devotion*. God demands that His people worship Him alone (Exodus 20:3-6).

“Revengeth” (KJV) is rightly translated *avengeth* in the New Scofield Reference Bible.

v. 3 — The goodness of God is seen in His judgment. He is “slow to anger.” He was over 100 years in executing the judgment He had announced through Jonah. Although the repentance under Jonah delayed the judgment of God for more than a century, He cannot “at all acquit the wicked,” for He is just and righteous.

vv. 4, 5 — The entire world must be judged on the basis of verse 3.

v. 6 — There is only one place of safety and security (Acts 4:12).

v. 7 — The Lord is good, and He will save.

v. 8 — The Lord is just, and He must judge.

Nineveh experienced the salvation of God before the judgment of God.

II. Justice and goodness of God demonstrated in decision to destroy Nineveh and to give the gospel, Chapter 1:9-15

v. 9 — Nineveh is to be totally destroyed.

v. 11 — Some identify this “wicked counselor” as Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:13-16; Isaiah 37:14-38).

v. 14 — “Grave” — God said, in substance, “I’ll bury you.” The Assyrian has disappeared from the stage of history.

v. 15 — This speaks of deliverance from Assyria. (See Isaiah 52:7 — here the deliverance is from Babylon. See Romans 10:15 — here the deliverance is from sin for the sinner, salvation.)

III. Justice and goodness of God exhibited in execution of His decision to destroy Nineveh, Chapters 2, 3

A. Annihilation of Assyria, Chapter 2

v. 1 — The picture is of a hammer, the handle of which is held by God. Total destruction of Assyria was accomplished by the Medes and Babylonians.

vv. 2-13 — This is a detailed prophecy which is today an accurate historical record.

“Chariots” (vv. 3, 4) is not a prediction of the automobile. To say that it is reveals a woeful ignorance of this prophecy.

God is justified in saying He is against Assyria (v. 13) because of her crimes. In Ezekiel (Ezekiel 38:3; 39:1), Russia had not yet appeared when the prophecy was given, yet God is still just because of antagonistic atheism.

B. Avenging action of God justified, Chapter 3

vv. 1, 2 — This describes the internal condition of the city. Lies mark the total culture. They make slaves.

vv. 3, 4 — This characterizes the external condition of the city. They were a brutal and cruel enemy. They sold slaves.

v. 5 — God opposes this (see Nahum 2:13).

v. 7 — They are hated and dreaded by other nations.

v. 8 — “No-amon,” or Thebes, capital of Upper Egypt, had been destroyed by Sargon of Assyria and should have been an example to Assyria.

v. 9 — Thebes had been protected by buffer states — Ethiopia at the south, Egypt at the north — and by desert on both ends.

v. 10 — Thebes was destroyed.

vv. 11-18 — This is a detailed description of the destruction of Nineveh.

v. 19 — There is now no healing, no turning to God. God had been slow to anger, but He does not clear the guilty.

God will save today (cp. Jonah).

God will destroy tomorrow (cp. Nahum).

God does not change; men do.

HABAKKUK

WRITER: Habakkuk

His name means *love's embrace*. Martin Luther gave a striking definition of his name, which cannot be improved upon: "Habakkuk signifies an embracer, or one who embraces another, takes him into his arms. He embraces his people and takes them to his arms, i.e., he comforts them and holds them up, as one embraces a weeping child, to quiet it with the assurance that, if God wills, it shall soon be better."

This is all that is known of the writer, except that he was the doubting Thomas of the Old Testament. He had a question mark for a brain.

TIME:

Probably written during the reign of Josiah, about the time of the destruction of Nineveh and the rise of Babylon to power. Habakkuk appeared in the twilight, just before the darkness of the captivity.

FORM:

The closing statement, "For the chief musician on my stringed instrument" (ARV), reveals that this is a song. The last chapter is a psalm. The entire prophecy is a gem of beauty. It has been translated into a metric version by Dr. Gaebelien. Delitzsch wrote, "His language is classical throughout, full of rare and select turns and words." Moorehouse wrote, "It is distinguished for its magnificent poetry."

MESSAGE:

The book opens in gloom and closes in glory. It begins with an interrogation mark and closes with an exclamation point. Habakkuk is a big WHY? Why God permits evil is a question that every thoughtful mind has faced. The book is the answer to the question: Will God straighten out the injustice of the world? This book answers the question: Is God doing anything about the wrongs of the world? This book says that He is. The book is the personal experience of the prophet told in poetry, as Jonah's was told in prose.

THEME: Faith

Habakkuk has been called "the prophet of faith." The great statement

of Habakkuk 2:4, “The just shall live by faith,” has been quoted three times in the New Testament: Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38.

OUTLINE:

I. Perplexity of the prophet, Chapter 1

A. First problem of the prophet, vv. 1-4

Why does God permit evil?

B. God’s answer, vv. 5-11

God was raising up Chaldeans to punish Judah (v. 6).

C. Second problem of the prophet (greater than first), vv. 12-17

Why would God permit His people to be punished by a nation more wicked than they? Why did He not destroy the Chaldeans?

II. Perspicuity of the prophet, Chapter 2

A. Practice of the prophet, v. 1

He took the secret problem to the secret place.

B. Patience of the prophet, vv. 2, 3

He waited for the vision.

C. Pageant for the prophet, v. 4

The great divide in humanity: One group, which is crooked, is flowing toward destruction; the other group, by faith, is moving toward God. This is inevitable.

D. Parable to the prophet, vv. 5-20

The application is self-evident from the vision. The Chaldeans, in turn, would be destroyed. God was moving among the nations.

III. Pleasure of the prophet, Chapter 3

A. Prayer of the prophet, vv. 1, 2

The prophet, who thought God was doing nothing about evil, now asks Him to remember to be merciful. Was he afraid that God was doing too much?

B. Program of God, vv. 3-15

God rides majestically in His own chariot of salvation (v. 8).

C. Position of the prophet, vv. 16-19

He will rejoice (v. 18). He has come from pain to pleasure.

COMMENT:

I. Perplexity of the prophet, Chapter 1

A. First problem of the prophet, vv. 1-4

Habakkuk is a man with problems.

v. 1 — “Burden” is the judgment of God upon His people and also upon the Babylonians.

v. 2 — Habakkuk feels that God is refusing to answer his prayer. He cries out in a night of despair as he sees violence, and God is doing nothing about it and, apparently, saying nothing. This is the elegy of Habakkuk. (Note the final verse of the book [Habakkuk 3:19]. It is the paean of praise with a note of joy.)

v. 3 — This is his first problem: Why does God permit His people to continue and increase in iniquity, injustice, strife, contention, and violence and do nothing about it? This is a capital WHY?

v. 4 — God’s law is ignored and spurned. There is no justice. The wicked are in control, and the righteous are in trouble.

B. God’s answer, vv. 5-11

v. 5 — God is doing something. He is working on this problem. Habakkuk would not believe it, for it would be contrary to what he wanted done.

v. 6 — God is preparing the Chaldeans (Babylonians) to come and

take Judah captive.

v. 7 — They make their own laws.

v. 8 — They use the cavalry in the campaigns.

vv. 9, 10 — They are conquerors.

v. 11 — They give their idols credit for their victories. At the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C., the Chaldeans won over Egypt and became the first great world power.

C. Second problem of the prophet (greater than first),
vv. 12-17

v. 12 — Habakkuk is sure God will judge the Chaldeans.

v. 13 — This is the problem: Although Israel is wicked, the Chaldeans are more wicked. Since God is holy, He should judge the Chaldeans first. Surely He could not permit the Chaldeans to chastise His people. Logically, the opposite should be true.

vv. 14-17 — Since the Chaldeans are so wicked, will they escape and God's people be judged?

II. Perspicuity of the prophet, Chapter 2

A. Practice of the prophet, v. 1

He takes the secret problem to the secret place. He does not publish his doubts. He knows God has the answer to his problem.

B. Patience of the prophet, vv. 2, 3

He will wait for the answer, for he knows it will be forthcoming.

C. Pageant for the prophet, v. 4

This is one of the most important verses in Scripture (see THEME). There is a sharp contrast here between the two groups of humanity. One group, the "lifted up" soul or the "puffed up" soul, is flowing like a river down to the sea of destruction. The other group,

saved by faith, is flowing toward the city of God and full knowledge — “*Then shall I know*” (1 Corinthians 13:12). Between the moment of salvation and the “then,” the one saved by faith will walk by faith. He may not have the answer now, but he will have it then.

D. Parable to the prophet, vv. 5-20

vv. 5-13 — The “puffed up” soul must be judged for these glaring sins:

Drunkenness, pride (v. 5)

Arrogance, ambition, rebelliousness (vv. 6-8)

Covetousness (v. 9)

Murder, iniquity, persecution (vv. 10-13)

v. 14 — This is the far-off goal toward which God is moving. This will be fulfilled when Christ returns to the earth (see Isaiah 11:9).

vv. 15, 16 — These are the sins that God judges here and now: drunkenness and immorality.

v. 17 — Violence.

vv. 18, 19 — False religion.

v. 20 — God is not yet in His holy temple. The earth is not silent today (see Psalm 2:1, 2).

III. Pleasure of the prophet, Chapter 3

A. Prayer of the prophet, vv. 1, 2

Notice the changed attitude of the prophet. At first he looked about and thought God was doing nothing. God took him to the watchtower of vision and let him see that He was not only judging His own people for their sins, but also the nations of the world. God was moving forward uncompromisingly to the day when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. Now Habakkuk pleads with God to remember to be merciful in the midst of His judgment.

B. Program of God, vv. 3-15

This is a poetic description of the past history of the nation. There is a casual reference to the following:

Abraham (vv. 3-6)
Moses (vv. 7-10)
Joshua (vv. 11-15)

C. Position of the prophet, vv. 16-19

vv. 17, 18 — Regardless of the circumstances in which he finds himself, he will rejoice in God. This is faith in action. This is saving faith. This is the message of Job and Paul.

v. 19 — This is a psalm of praise set to instrumental and vocal music to be used in the temple.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- Feinberg, Charles L. *The Minor Prophets*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1976.
- Freeman, Hobart E. *Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1973.
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- Ironside, H. A. *The Minor Prophets*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, n.d.
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- McGee, J. Vernon. *Nahum and Habakkuk*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991.
- Tatford, Frederick A. *The Minor Prophets*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Klock & Klock, n.d.
- Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 2. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1982.

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