

Major Messages from the Minor Prophets
God is Good! God is Great!
The Book of Nahum

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Dr. Steve Horn

Text Introduction: The Prophets of the Old Testament are divided by scholars into the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. More precisely, we call Isaiah, along with Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel, Major Prophets. The remaining books of the Old Testament are called Minor Prophets. The terms major and minor refer to the size of these books, not the degree of their importance.¹

There are 12 Minor Prophets. We are studying through the Minor Prophets devoting one Sunday (one sermon) to each of the twelve. Because all of the prophets are somewhat similar, our goal is to discover that central core message of the book. Today, we are studying the Book of Nahum.

Text: The LORD is a jealous and avenging God;
the LORD takes vengeance
and is fierce in wrath.

The LORD takes vengeance against His foes;
He is furious with His enemies.

³The LORD is slow to anger but great in power;
the LORD will never leave the guilty unpunished.
His path is in the whirlwind and storm,
and clouds are the dust beneath His feet.

⁴He rebukes the sea so that it dries up,
and He makes all the rivers run dry.
Bashan and Carmel wither;
even the flower of Lebanon withers.

⁵The mountains quake before Him,
and the hills melt;
the earth trembles at His presence—
the world and all who live in it.

⁶Who can withstand His indignation?
Who can endure His burning anger?
His wrath is poured out like fire,
even rocks are shattered before Him.

⁷The LORD is good,
a stronghold in a day of distress;
He cares for those who take refuge in Him.

⁸But He will completely destroy Nineveh
with an overwhelming flood,
and He will chase His enemies into darkness.

¹ Lamentations is considered with these books as a major prophet because it is written by Jeremiah.

Introduction: One commentator said of this book, “We often wish Nahum were not in the canon, and the book has been almost totally ignored in the modern church.” (Waylon Bailey quoting Elizabeth Achtemeier, NAC, 137) Nahum is no easy book. It is not an easy book to read, and it is not an easy book to apply to our lives. But, we believe that all Scripture is given to us by inspiration of God and is profitable for us—for our teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training, so that all of us may be complete, equipped for every good work.

So, what is the message for us in this book? In order to understand that, we must understand something about the meaning of this book to its original hearers. Nahum, unlike the prophets whose messages focused on Israel/Judah, prophesied certain doom to Nineveh, the premier city of Assyria. The city of Nineveh fell to the Medes and Babylonians in 612 B.C., so we know that Nahum prophesied before then. On the other side, we know that Nahum must have come after Jonah, because the outcome of Jonah’s ministry was the salvation of Nineveh. The question should be raised as to why Nahum should be included in the canon of the Bible. How does the story of Nineveh and their wickedness play a part in the story of God and His people, Israel? To understand the answer to this question, we begin by realizing that Nahum means “comforter.” Assyria is a chief enemy of God’s people. God comforts His people by unfolding the description of the doom of their enemy, Assyria.

So, let’s focus on these three major players in the story—Nineveh, Judah, and Nahum, himself, and discover a lesson from each.

Lesson in the Message about Nineveh

Where have we encountered Nineveh in this series? Nineveh was the city to whom Jonah was called to preach. He preached. They repented. But about 100 years later, nothing has really changed in Nineveh. The repentance was short-lived. So here is the lesson: Repentance that doesn’t last is not really repentance. The Lord is slow to anger, but great in power; the Lord will never leave the guilty unpunished.

One of the questions that this book causes us to ask is: Are we facing a Jonah moment or a Nahum moment?

Lesson in the Message to Judah

The message is about Nineveh, but the message is to Judah. This is important in understanding the book. Nineveh, in addition to being the wicked city that God sent Jonah to, was also the capital city of the Assyrians. Assyria held dominance over Judah in Nahum’s day. Assyria was the enemy. Assyria is the representation of all that was evil, and Nineveh is the chief city. So here is the lesson through the lens of Judah: We can trust God with all of the evil of this world. God gets the final word against evil.

Martin Luther said of this book, “Nahum teaches us to trust God and to believe, especially when we despair of all human help, human powers, and all counsel, that the Lord stands by those who are His, shields His own against all attacks of the enemy, be they ever so powerful.” (As quoted by Bailey, NAC, 153)

This book expresses that Nineveh doesn’t stand a chance against God. Consider Nahum 2:13. You have heard it said, “If God be for us who can be against us?” (That is in Romans) The opposite of that is true.

“If God is against, it doesn’t matter what that person does or who that person is?” This ought to help us to trust God with those who oppose Him and His Word. He will have the final say!

Lesson in the Message of Nahum's Name

Nahum means “comforter.” This is a gory book. This is a book that speaks of God’s judgment. Yet, God intended it to be a message of comfort for Judah. And because of that, I think He means for us to believe that it is a message of comfort for us.

Here’s the lesson: God is good because He is great! God is great because He is just!

I want to leave you with four New Testament truths that echo the truths that we have uncovered today.

- Don’t be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows he will also reap, (Galatians 6:7)
- Then I heard something like the voice of a vast multitude, like the sound of cascading waters, and like the rumbling of loud thunder, saying:
Hallelujah, because our Lord God, the Almighty,
has begun to reign! (Revelation 19:6)
- Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don’t go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send Him to you. (John 16:7)

And because of all of this....

I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.” (John 16:33)