

## Nahum

1. Introduction – Nahum delivers a prophetic message in poetic form, a beautifully written but scathing condemnation of Nineveh for her role as the capital city of Assyria in attacking and taking Israel (the northern kingdom) captive. Nahum prophecies the demise of Nineveh.
2. Author, date, historical setting – Nahum is identified as the author in 1:1. His name means “comfort” or “compassion.” He is said to be from Elkosh. There are several theories about its location, but knowledge of the location does little to help us understand the book. Nahum probably wrote somewhere between 652 and 626 B.C. Thebes had already fallen in 664 (3:8), and Nineveh was yet to fall to the Babylonians and Medes (612).
3. Literary character – Nahum is widely recognized as beautiful poetry with a harsh message. Nahum is a master of imagery as well as parallelism. Nahum uses an acrostic (beginning each line in sequence with the next letter of the alphabet) in Ch. 1. Unlike many other prophecies, Nahum is not a mixture of history and a record of prophecy occurring in the midst of the historical. Rather, the entire book is the message itself. The book is tightly structured, with taunts against Nineveh masterfully woven together and ending in a dirge.
4. Comparison to Jonah – There are several interesting points of comparison and contrast with the book of Jonah:
  - a. Both are about prophecies directed toward Nineveh.
  - b. Jonah is almost entirely historical, with only one verse devoted to the message delivered; Nahum is entirely composed of the message against Nineveh.
  - c. Neither message offers hope, but the Ninevites repent at Jonah’s message.
  - d. In Jonah the end result is that the Ninevites repent; in Nahum the end result is that Nineveh is to be destroyed.
  - e. In Jonah God is portrayed as merciful toward the nations; in Nahum he is portrayed as righteously indignant toward those who destroy his people.
  - f. Both Jonah and Nahum end with a rhetorical question. No other book of the Bible ends with a rhetorical question.
5. Structure:
  - a. God the divine warrior fights for his people and punishes their enemies (1)
  - b. A vision and taunt concerning Nineveh’s destruction (2)
  - c. The case for Nineveh’s destruction (3)
6. Message:
  - a. God is sovereign and may use any instrument he pleases for the discipline of his people. And yet that instrument is morally responsible for its actions and will be held accountable for its own sin.
  - b. God is a divine warrior. He fights on behalf of his people. This would have been a particular encouragement to the people of Judah, who lived through the threat of Assyria and were assured that their enemy would be cast down. This ought to encourage us as we face the enemies of souls all around and within us.
  - c. Christ himself has become a warrior on our behalf, fighting against Satan, sin, and death on behalf of his people (1 Cor. 15:20-28, Col. 2:14-15, Eph. 4:7-11, Rev. 19:11-21).

### Reference:

*An Introduction to the Old Testament*, R. B. Dillard and T. Longman III, Zondervan, 1994.