

Cheer! Clap Your Hands!

Nahum 3:1-19

1. If you witnessed the destruction of one of the greatest cities in the world would it be disturbing to you? Explain.

Open Your Heart: Begin this study with silent prayer. Focus your heart and mind on God. Recall His words in Isaiah 55:8: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD."

The Filth of Nineveh

In Nahum 3:1-4 the sins of Nineveh are spelled out for the first time. **Read these four verses in unison** from the NIV to get the feel of Nahum's graphic message. Notice the striking four-beat measured cadence of galloping horses (verses 2-3).

2. From verse 1, list the evils that brought the pronouncements of "woe" upon Nineveh.
3. Describe the sights and sounds of Nineveh's previous triumphs that were heard and witnessed by the prophet Nahum (verses 2-3).

Center your attention now on Nahum 3:4. **Study** this verse with the purpose of understanding more fully the nature of evil and Nineveh's vile sins. Underline each word that makes reference to the evil ways of the Assyrians.

4. What are the two primary sins engaged in by the Assyrians that were used as a means to enslave others?
5. Comment on why you think these two sins are often coupled together in the Bible. (Consult 2 Kings 9:22; Isaiah 57:3; Galatians 5:19-20; Revelation 21:8 and 22:15.)

Note: All of Assyria's bloody conquests were conducted in the name of their gods, and nations that were subject to them were required to reverence their deities and compelled to pay their gods honor. Gross immorality always accompanied the practice of idolatry. Assyria employed sorcery and other occult practices in an effort to seduce and overcome others. They also used these means to learn their fate, determine the course of the future or the outcome of their military campaigns, as well as to gain favor with their gods.

God's attitude concerning those who participate in such things, whether nations or individuals, is one of severest rebuke. (See Deuteronomy 18:9-12.)

6. What fearful words are uttered by the living God against those who have committed these crimes? (Nahum 3:5a) _____
_____ (Also see Nahum 2:13.)

The judgment described in Nahum 3:5-7 is likened to a whore who has been caught and is about to be subjected to the most shameful and disgraceful treatment imaginable. This is in keeping with the practice of exposing a woman convicted of whoredom. (See Ezekiel 16:37-42 and Hosea 2:3.)

7. Why do you think it was important that the disgrace of Nineveh was made as public as possible (Nahum 3:5-6)?
8. How will the nations looking on respond to the shame of Nineveh (3:7)?
9. Why was there no one to lament Nineveh's fall or to comfort her?
10. What have you learned about the nature of evil from the book of Nahum? Spend some time reflecting on this subject before answering.
11. Can you describe an occasion in your life when you personally witnessed the power of evil? How did you react or respond?

Nahum continues to use various figures of speech to describe how different segments of the Ninevite society would respond to the coming invasion (3:8-19). The literary form of this section is that of a taunt song.

Read Nahum 3:8-10 along with the following quote. “Sometime between 668 and 622 B. C. the armies of Ashurbanipal set out from Nineveh and marched through Egypt’s delta country, leaving a trail of fire, ruin and death behind him. He surrounded Thebes and took it after minimal delays. He took captive everyone he could and killed the rest. The children were massacred in the streets. Nahum now brings this memory before the people of Nineveh.” -Boice

Review verses 8-10. Consider the reasons for Nahum’s comparison of Nineveh to Thebes, the capital city of southern Egypt.

12. What message would Nahum’s forceful comparison send to the mighty Ninevites?

Verse 11 refers to the last drunken orgy of the city of Nineveh on the night of her fall, but it is also a common Scriptural figure for those who have drunk of the cup of God’s wrath. (See Isaiah 51:17; Lamentations 4:21 and Habakkuk 2:16.)

13. How does Nahum describe the ease with which Nineveh’s strongholds will be taken (verse 12)?

In Assyria’s final days everything seems to fly apart and when the end comes it comes quickly! This is Nahum’s point in the final verses of his prophecy. **Read** verses 13-17. Notice his mocking tone.

14. What *failures in Assyrian life* are prophesied in the vivid figures of speech in verses 13-17?

15. Nahum concludes his taunting prophecy with a funeral chant. **Read verses 18-19 aloud together.** Remember that Nahum is seeing and experiencing this scene in his mind’s eye.

16. Why was it fitting for those who heard the news about the king of Assyria to clap their hands (Nahum 3:18-19)?

Assyria had been a world empire for almost 300 years—from 900-607 B.C. But Assyria's time had finally come to its well deserved end! The fulfillment of Nahum's prophecy took place about a half-century later. So effectively did God dig her grave and bury her (Nahum 1:14) that every trace of Nineveh's existence disappeared for over 2,000 years, and even its site was unknown. History has no other example of so complete a destruction of such a great city.

For Thought and Discussion

One of the most important aspects of Nahum's message is what it says about God. *God does not change in character but He does change in His response to us.*

17. In your own words define the wrath of God as you understand it at this point in time.
18. Why do you think it is important to view God's wrath against nations and individuals through the lens of His love? In what ways does God's vengeance prove His love?
19. How has Nahum's message resonated with you personally? Talk honestly with God about how He wants you to live in a world where we are surrounded by evil. How will the truths and principles from the book of Nahum help you deal with the injustices in our world?

*Sing to the LORD, you saints of His;
Praise His holy name
For His anger lasts only a moment,
But His favor lasts a lifetime;
Weeping may remain for a night,
But rejoicing comes in the morning.
Psalm 30:5*