

7. A Survey Study of Nahum ("God's Doom")

a. An overview:

This small book looks to the reality of God's judgment on Assyria as a comforting thought for Judah..the homeland of the prophet where the Assyrian empire had cast an evil shadow indeed. Nahum's name is from the Hebrew word for "comfort" and if this is significant in the study of the book, it is comfort for God's people in knowing the way in which He will deal with His foes. The date is in the last half of the seventh century BC..sometime after 663 BC when Ashurbanipal conquered the Egyptian city of Thebes (No in Nahum 3:8) and 627 BC when after the death of Ashurbanipal the Assyrian nation began to fall apart. It is possible the book was written between 627 and 612 when Ninevah fell. But the burden of Nahum is a prophecy against the Assyrian and the capital of Ninevah. Modern scholars often assume Nahum is the voice of a prophetic cult arguing for nationalistic tendencies but this does not seem to be the case in light of the deep trust he expresses for God (1:7) rather than the armies of men. The thrust of the book is to show the committed burden of God for those who lie in deceit and whose policies have been for abuse and terrorization of others.

When we outline Nahum...the task is both simple and complex.

- I. The basis of God's actions 1:1-15
- II. The nature of God's actions on Ninevah 2:1-3:19

I suppose one can develop a deeper and more uplifting outline than this but for the moment we will just let it go at that.

In the redemptive history Nahum reminds us of the beauty and security of the Lord's Person (1:7) as is especially meaningful in a time of trial. The goodness of the Lord that sustains His own and performs His word is the same power that judges and cancels the plots of the wicked. Verse 15 (ch. 1) is a general statement given a particular thrust in Romans 10:15, a prophetic device that is fairly common. We are reminded that only a deep trust in God (and a genuine committedness to His will) is salvational in the course of our activities.

Nahum questions may include ponderable points on God's vengeance (1:2) and the old chestnut as to why God permits the wicked to go to the extremes which they take before Him?

In the archaeology line the destruction foretold by Nahum was completely fulfilled in the overthrow of the Assyrian empire (614-612 BC). The very existence-cite of Ninevah was "lost" for centuries but beginning in the middle of the 19th century and continuing to the present, successive archaeological works have been developed to show the greatness of that empire and the totality of its collapse. Nahum suggests the aid of a flood...perhaps high water in the smaller but more seasonal "Assyria River" just north of the great ruins. But the nation did go into captivity so completely as to be only a memory in the ancient history collection.

Keys for understanding Nahum include a fuller understanding of the justice and holiness of God and His desire for a demonstration of righteousness. As in Isaiah, Habakkuk and others, God willingly allows these nations to exercise themselves most aggressively in accomplishing parts of His will. But he also holds the accountable. Note the strength of God's anger (1:6).