Lesson 9: Jonah, Nahum and Nineveh

Readings – Jonah, Nahum

WHEN?

The history of the divided kingdom has been divided into the time periods of different oppressors. Circle the prophets in this lesson & mark the decades of their activities using the timelines in the reference section/back cover.

WHY?

We will study two prophets who speak to Assyria. Jonah is sent to call them to repent and could be called the most reluctant prophet. Some 150 years later with Israel taken into captivity, all but Jerusalem taken during the reign of Hezekiah, we find Nahum who foretells of the coming destruction of Nineveh about 40 years before the city falling.

Jonah undoubtedly is mentioned in II Kings 14:25 since he is identified as the son of Amittai there and in Jonah 1:1. Thus Jonah was from Gathhepher, a town in Galilee and part of the Northern Kingdom (Israel). Jonah is said to have prophesied during the reign of Jereboam II (793-753 BC) giving us a general idea as to the date of the book. The account centers around Jonah’s call from God to preach to Nineveh. The city of Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, the nation that would destroy and scatter Israel in 722 BC. Jonah was aware of the cruelty of the Assyrians, yet fear does not explain his hesitation. As we shall see, his reluctance was due to an even more despicable motivation.

Jonah 4:11 (ESV)

11 And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

Nahum prophesied between 663 BC and 612 BC (when Nineveh fell) with a good probable date being around 650 BC. In this message we see the wrath of God fallen upon this nation which had served his purpose of punishment but with great cruelty.

Nahum 2:13 (ESV)

13 Behold, I am against you, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will burn your chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions. I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall no longer be heard.

Piled heads appear in a relief the heads are collected inside a tent, at left. Outside the tent, two Assyrian soldiers carrying additional heads wade through the decapitated bodies. The practice is seen in Nahum 3:3 Horsemen charging flashing sword and glittering spear, hosts of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end—they stumble over the bodies!
Big Ideas in JONAH

- God is sovereign—he has absolute control and power and will carry out his plans on earth.
- If they repent, God shows mercy even to the enemies of his people.
- God demands obedience but offers second chances.
- God loves people who don’t know him and expects his people to do the same.

Big Ideas in NAHUM

- God brings judgment on those who fail to live up to their earlier repentance.
- God is a warrior who wages war against those who resist him.
- God punishes those who are violent, idolatrous, ruthless in business, materialistic, and cruel.
- God will free his people from captivity and restore them.

What task have you been given that you tried to avoid but finally had to do? How would you compare your efforts to avoid a task to Jonah’s efforts?

~630 BC

~780 BC

Divided Kingdom

North
- Jonah
- Amos
- Hosea

South
- Obadiah
- Joel
- Micah
- Isaiah

Judah Alone

- Nahum
- Jeremiah
- Zephaniah
- Habakkuk
- Daniel
- Ezekiel

Captivity

Return

Assyrians

Babylonians

Medes/Persians
OT HISTORY

Prophets and Kings

Key Verses

**Jonah 1:1-2 (ESV)**

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,
2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”

**Jonah 4:2 (ESV)**

2 And he prayed to the LORD and said, “O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.

Told to preach in Nineveh resulted in his being swallowed by a fish & city repenting

Outline - Jonah

I. Jonah Flees
   A. Jonah’s commissioning and flight (1:1–3)
   B. Jonah and the pagan sailors (1:4–16)
   C. Jonah’s grateful prayer (1:17–2:10)

II. Jonah goes to Nineveh
   A. Jonah’s recommissioning & compliance (3:1–3a)
   B. Jonah and the pagan Ninevites (3:3b–10)

III. Jonah’s Anger
   A. Jonah’s angry prayer (4:1–4)
   B. Jonah’s lesson about compassion (4:5–11)

The first three episodes of Jonah’s flight are paralleled by the second three as he preaches to Nineveh. The final episode is unparalleled and thus stands out as the climax of the story, ending with the penetrating question, “And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”

**Jonah 2:5-6 (ESV)**

5 The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head 6 at the roots of the mountains.

I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.

The Sign of Jonah


> Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.”

But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.”

For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

List Your Favorite Verse/s
The prophet predicts the fall of Nineveh

Key Verses

Nahum 1:2 (ESV)
2 The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.

Nahum 1:7-8 (ESV)
7 The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. 8 But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

Outline - Nahum

I. God’s wrath against Nineveh
II. The siege & fall of Nineveh
III. The sin’s which led to Nineveh’s fall

Nahum preached during the reign of King Manasseh, one of the most evil kings in Judah’s long history, a man who needed the pain of his own experience to teach him the lessons of being a good king. The book of Nahum mentions the recent fall of N-O-A-M-O-N, or Thebes, which occurred in 663 BC (Nahum 3:8), as well as the coming destruction of Nineveh, which happened in 612 BC (1:1; 3:11–15). But when, during this more than fifty-year period, did Nahum preach? The Assyrian Empire, which had its capital at Nineveh, was at its most powerful in the first half of this period, having a stranglehold on Judah during King Manasseh’s reign (2 Chr 33:10–13). Also, while the book of Nahum mentions the destruction of Thebes, it does not mention its reconstruction, which took place in 654 BC. This leads to date Nahum’s prophecy between the years of 663 and 654 BC. Manasseh was probably taken as a captive under the reign of Ashurbanipal the last powerful king and who put down a revolt lasting from 652 to 648 BC. Manasseh’s great conversion took place late in his reign, ~648 BC, a mere half-dozen years before his death. That means Nahum preached during the darkest period in Judah’s history to that point, a time filled with idolatry of all kinds in a nation that had fully turned its back on God.