

Intro

- Unlike many of the other minor prophets we have looked at, Nahum is a bit more depressing. In the other prophesies, the prophets often end on a high note - looking forward to Judah coming out of exile, to the coming of Jesus or even to the end of time itself.
- Nahum, however, doesn't end with any of that. He's prophesying about the Assyrians, and it's bad news from them from the very beginning to the very end.
- BUT, if you look closely, there are some really encouraging points we can take from it, which is what I'm going to try and do.
- So I'm going to start by giving a bit of background and a bit of history to the book, then as it's only three chapters I can actually talk you through what's going on, and then we can see what we can get out of the book and how we can apply it to our daily lives.

History

- Nahum can actually be seen as a sequel to Jonah which Matt talked on, as he is prophesying about Nineveh (the capital of Assyria, which was a huge empire and enemies of Israel) which is where Jonah was sent to prophesy against but about 100 years later.
- The difference is though, that Jonah was sent to prophesy and tell the Assyrians in Nineveh to stop what they were doing and ask God for forgiveness, while Nahum is simply given a prophesy against Nineveh, telling them what God was going to do to them - they weren't being given a second chance.
- This is because, after Jonah went to them and they stopped doing their evil deeds so God wouldn't destroy them, they shortly turned back on their word and were much, much worse than before!
- Nahum's prophesy is about the destruction of Nineveh, which God accomplished by using the Babylonians and the Medes in about 612 BC, and many scholars think that Nahum was written shortly before this, declaring what God was about to do.
- This is over 100 years after Israel was taken into exile to Assyria for not obeying God.

Onto the book itself

- We need to remember that the original writer of Nahum, and the authors of the rest of the Bible, didn't break their books up into chapters and verses - that was done by scholars much later on. However, Nahum seems to be split up very neatly as each chapter is very much about one particular thing.
- Chapter one is all about God - it's about God's awesome power, his anger and wrath at Nineveh. There's a bit more in 1, but I'm saving that until the end - so you've got to keep listening to find out!
 - **1:1-6 A prophecy concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The Lord takes vengeance on his foes and vents his wrath against his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger but great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and dries it up; he makes all the rivers run dry. Bashan and Carmel wither and the blossoms of Lebanon fade. The mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it. Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; the rocks are shattered before him.**

- These verses are all about God's power - he can make the 'hills melt', 'rivers run dry' - they paint such a powerful and awesome picture of God.
- **1:14 - The Lord has given a command concerning you, Nineveh: "You will have no descendants to bear your name. I will destroy the images and idols that are in the temple of your gods. I will prepare your grave, for you are vile."**
- This really shows God's anger against Nineveh, and how he will wipe them from the Earth.
- Chapter two goes into the actual destruction of the city into real detail - such detail that Nahum could only have been given by God. For example, vv 5-6 show how the siege actually happened.
- **2:5-6 - Nineveh summons her picked troops, yet they stumble on their way. They dash to the city wall; the protective shield is put in place. The river gates are thrown open and the palace collapses.**
- Verse 5 talks about 'the protective shield is put in place' - this is actually a 'tortoise' siege engine formation, which we know about from Assyrian artwork. The description of river gates being thrown open in verse 6 happened too - the Tigris was the river, and it flooded the inner temple that was being laid siege to and everything collapsed onto itself.
- Finally, in chapter 3 Nahum is dealing with different aspects of Nineveh's downfall. There's too much to talk about here, but we are for the first time given an indication of why God overthrew Nineveh in chapter 3 verse 4 (read).
- **3:4 - all because of the wanton lust of a prostitute, alluring, the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft.**
- The last few verses are particularly final - decreeing the utter devastation of Nineveh. READ THEM (3:18-19).
- **3:18-19 - King of Assyria, your shepherds slumber; your nobles lie down to rest. Your people are scattered on the mountains with no one to gather them. Nothing can heal you; your wound is fatal. All who hear the news about you clap their hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?**

So what?

- So there we have it - Nineveh is to be destroyed, nothing will be left. It's pretty grim isn't it?
- Well actually, it isn't. God destroys Nineveh because they turned from their repentance back to their old ways. The chance they were given through Jonah was a chance at life, and they turned away from it and from God and went on sinning worse than before. What's more, they were enemies of God's chosen people and were oppressing them.
- However, this doesn't necessarily make it any easier for us to take in the fact that God has utterly destroyed the city of Nineveh. But God did it because God is a JUST god, as well as a loving god. There must be punishment for what Assyria did - this is why Jesus died on the cross for us, because he was suffering the punishment for all the wrong we have done and will do. He took our punishment so we don't have to. That is why we worship him, why we sing his praises, why we give our lives to his service - because, without him, we would be in the same position as Nineveh.
- **GOSPEL BIT** - Jesus died for us like this because we can't save ourselves. He was God in human form, he was perfect and did no wrong (unlike every other human every to live) but he chose to die on the cross and take all our wrong, what the bible calls sin, upon himself. This means that, if you recognise the wrong we have done to others and to god and ask God for

forgiveness through Jesus, it will be given freely to you and God will forget - will literally wipe out - every sin you have ever committed. And then you can live in the love and security of God, praising him for what Jesus has done, both here on earth and for eternity in heaven.

Nahum as comforter

- Now we get to the encouraging part of Nahum, so I can finish this sermon on a bit of a high note. Do you remember that I said there was a part of chapter 1 that I was leaving to the end? Well, this is it.
- If you know where to look, there is actually a lot of joy and comfort to come from Nahum 1. The name Nahum even means 'comforter' in Hebrew. Hiding within the awful prophecy about Nineveh, Nahum writes some verses directed to Judah, God's chosen people. These verses would bring great joy to the people of Judah in Nahum's day, and they bring great joy to us as God's children here and now.
 - Verses 7-8 read - **The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him, but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh; he will pursue his foes into the realm of darkness.**
- Here Nahum is telling us that God is against those who are his foes, but cares for and is a refuge for those who trust in him.
 - Verses 12-13 read - **This is what the Lord says: "Although they have allies and are numerous, they will be destroyed and pass away. Although I have afflicted you, Judah, I will afflict you no more. Now I will break their yoke from your neck and tear your shackles away."**
- Again, God is going to destroy Nineveh, who is an enemy of Judah, so they can't harm Judah anymore. He is looking after his people.
- Finally, 1:15 is the most uplifting verse in the whole of the book of Nahum, and is such a joy to those who love and trust God. It reads - **Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, Judah, and fulfill your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed.**
- Nahum is saying that peace will be proclaimed in Judah and they will be able to celebrate the festivals that God has asked them to again and they can take great joy in this, because He has destroyed their enemies. They will be safe once more.
- After reading these verses, it isn't surprising to be told that this prophecy wasn't even intended for the ears of the Assyrians in Nineveh - they were in fact intended to be read to Judah. The whole prophecy, from start to finish, is meant to be a comfort to Judah as it describes how God will destroy their enemy and they can live in peace again.

Final Point

- So what should we take away from Nahum? I think the main message is this - we should be in awe of God. He is powerful beyond our wildest dreams and he uses this power for the good of his people. He is a safe refuge, a rescuer, a saviour for those who love him, but he is utterly against all who oppose him.
- Nahum reminds us that as God's people, we have nothing to be afraid of. God is the mightiest being in this and any other Universe, and he cares for us and is on our side. So if you came here tonight and you don't know God, you don't know of the life saving forgiveness offered by Jesus on the cross, and you want to be surrounded and upheld by the amazing power and love of God, I strongly suggest that you speak to someone you trust, maybe the person who invited you here

today, or Mark, myself or the ministry team, or the person who welcomed you on the door today and we will be delighted introduce you to sJesus himself.

- And if there is anything I've said that you feel you'd like prayer for, then again please do use the ministry team - they're here to help. Thank you.