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Nahum – Historical & Critical Info

- As a non-standard prophet, Nahum prophecies against Nineveh—the capital of Assyria—after the destruction of the northern kingdom (722/721 BC). Though the book has no superscription, it clearly post-dates the destruction of Thebes (3:8-10) in 663 BC but almost certainly came before the waning of Assyrian military strength following the death of Ashurbanipal (626 BC).
 - o Nineveh was annihilated by the Babylonians in 612 BC at the Battle of Nineveh.
- Nahum, whose name means “comfort,” uses biting taunts and sarcasm, brief, staccato-style phrasing and Assyrian themes to condemn Nineveh to help the reader to *feel* the angst and tension of the annihilation that is coming.
 - o Think of chapters 2-3 as snapshots/zoom-ins of the Battle of Helm Deep (i.e., Nineveh).
- Chapters 2-3 form a large chiasm, with 3:1-4 at the center (the most emphasized element). Furthermore, the whole section is located within an *inclusio* (1:15; 3:18-19).

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Chap 2-3 Chiasm

- o Call to Celebrate (1:15) (2:1 in Hebrew)
 - The Prophet’s Vision (2:1-10)
 - The Prophet’s Taunt (2:11-12)
 - The Declaration of Yahweh (2:13)
 - ❖ Woe Oracle (3:1-4)
 - The Declaration of Yahweh (3:5-7)
 - The Prophet’s Taunt (3:8-13)
 - The Prophet’s Vision (3:14-17)
 - o Call to Celebrate (3:18-19)

3

Nahum Cont...

• Main Themes

- God the avenger and deliverer
- The immanence and sovereignty of God

• Role in the Twelve

- Nahum introduces the first part of the judgment section of the Twelve, with Habakkuk being the second. At this point, judgment on the nations and Judah are inevitable because of their continued wickedness. There is no hope of avoiding God's wrath.

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Prophetic Element Spotlight | Rejoicing Over the Death of the Wicked

- Rejoicing over the death of the wicked and enemies is wrong
 - o Prov. 17:5; 24:17-18; Job 31:29; Ez. 18:23
- Rejoicing over the death of the wicked and enemies is right
 - o Prov. 11:10; Ps. 58:10; Deut. 32:43; Rev. 18:20
- Remembering Justice
 - o Recall how prominent the theme of justice is in the Twelve, not only final justice against the enemies of God in the future but *doing and administering justice* in the present. A synthesis of the biblical material suggests a few principles for thinking well about rejoicing over the death of the wicked and enemies in light of God's justice:

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Prophetic Element Spotlight | Rejoicing Over the Death of the Wicked

- Just Outcome Principle
 - Is the *world clearly more just* because of the death of this person (i.e., Osama Bin Laden, Hitler)? If so, rejoicing is **appropriate**.
- Personal Satisfaction Principle
 - Am I rejoicing out of *personal satisfaction* over someone else's misfortune and/or demise? If so, rejoicing is **inappropriate**.
- Triumph of God Principle
 - Am I glorying and worshipping because *God has triumphed in righteousness* over those who oppose him and his people *in the present* as a foretaste of final victory? If so, rejoicing is **appropriate**.
- Eternal Death Principle
 - Am I rejoicing over someone's *individual, eternal damnation* because I hate or dislike them? If so, rejoicing is **inappropriate**.

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Prophetic Element Spotlight | Rejoicing Over the Death of the Wicked

- Ultimately, our rejoicing in the death of the wicked should be fueled by our love for justice and righteousness (i.e., God-centered), and not by the kind of personal satisfaction we might experience if we were to have taken vengeance into our own hands (us-centered). Of course, in some cases the two overlap as God uses people to accomplish his ends.
 - Experiencing both joy and sorrow at the death of the wicked is perfectly coherent. One might rejoice, for example, that the world is a more just place as the result of a dead tyrant, yet express sorrow that the tyrant will spend eternity apart from God (eternal death) with no further opportunity to repent.

7

Nahum Cont...

- **Textual Connection to the New Testament**
 - Nahum 1:15—and likely Isa. 52:7—may lie behind Rom. 10:15.
- **Application in Light of Christ**
 - The comfort provided by judgment—accomplished and impending
 - The God who is *working*

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