



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

**JONAH, MICAH
AND NAHUM**

Week 4

A Ray of Hope

DAY 22

Micah 7:8-13

Have you ever experienced a ray of hope when circumstances in your life looked bleak and hopeless?

1. Who is speaking in this section—Micah, God or Israel (v. 8)?
 2. Those who gloated over and ridiculed the nation of Israel in her time of distress would one day experience what (v. 10)?
 3. What would one day go up that was about to come down (v. 11)?
 4. In the future, travel agents would be busy booking tours for eager people to visit Israel from what improbable countries (v. 12)?
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1. What circumstance has caused the most hopeless feeling you've ever experienced?
 2. Do you remember asking God for help in that time, or did you have to face it alone?
 3. Do you believe God has given you hope when you felt most hopeless? How?
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***“Do not gloat over me”** (v. 8). At this point Micah is apparently speaking as a representative for his people, identifying with their sins.*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

“Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance, which lives by itself in a forest, in fertile pasturelands. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in days long ago.”

Micah 7:14



Region of Gilead—photo by Silvia Owen—PTM

The Final Scene

DAY 23

Micah 7:14-20

In many good movies, the final scene ties together the conflict and resolution. What is your favorite such scene?

1. Who is speaking in verse fourteen—God or Micah?
2. Where were Bashan and Gilead (v. 14)?
3. The final picture of the nations' attitude toward Israel (vs. 16-17) can best be characterized as: (a) arrogant, (b) conceited, (c) patronizing, (d) subservient.
4. What does God delight to show to our world (v. 18)?

1. If you could write the perfect final scene for your own life, what would it be?
2. What do you imagine your final life scene might have been if God had not graciously enlightened you, inviting you to receive his grace?
3. Take some time and reflect on three times in your life in which you received or experienced God's mercy, rather than what you deserved. What does this teach you about God?

***"Shepherd your people"** (v. 14). It appears that the speaker here is Micah, asking God to shepherd his people again. Yet in verse 15, God is speaking, as if in reply to Micah. Finally, in verse 16 and following, Micah is again speaking. **"Who is a God like you who pardons sin..."** (v. 18). Orthodox Jews read verses 18-20 in their synagogues on the Day of Atonement, after they read the book of Jonah.*

OPENING
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DIGGING
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LIVING
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WINDOW
on the Word

Introduction to Nahum

Authorship: Almost nothing is known about Nahum except that his name means “consolation” or “comfort,” which was appropriate for his ministry to Judah. The term *Elkoshite* (v. 1) suggests that his hometown was called Elkosh, but there is no known town of that name. It is possible that the town was in Judah, since he prophesied on behalf of Judah.

Date: It is assumed that this book was written between 663 and 612 B.C., perhaps 130 to 180 years after Jonah’s ministry to Nineveh.

Setting and purpose: Nineveh the city, the subject of Nahum’s prophecy, was founded by Nimrod (Ge 10:11-12). It eventually became the capital of the Assyrian Empire. Both Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 B.C.) and Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) had their palaces in Nineveh. Shalmaneser III (859-824 B.C.) made Nineveh the base of his military operations. Azariah, king of Judah (790-739 B.C.) paid tribute to Tiglath Pileser III, who reigned in Nineveh. Menahem, king of Israel (752-742 B.C.) paid tribute also (2Ki 15:14-22).

Nineveh was the capital of one of the cruelest empires ever known, the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrian’s cruel blood-lust in battle and to their captives was well documented. Nineveh was also headquarters for the idolatry that flourished throughout the Assyrian Empire.

In this prophecy, Nineveh is held accountable for her many atrocities, and God declares that the time has come to bring his overdue judgment. Judah was afraid of Assyria, even though God had destroyed Sennacherib’s great army, which had come against Jerusalem. Even so, Assyria always had intentions to conquer Judah. In this prophecy, God comforts Judah with the assurance that it would not happen. Assyria, instead of invading and conquering Judah, would herself be invaded and captured by the Persians and the Medes. As she had sown, so she would now reap, reminding Judah that God is in control, and faithful.

Reading outline:

I. NINEVEH'S CERTAIN DOOM, 1

A. Nineveh: The Sequel, 1:1-8

B. Grave News for Nineveh, 1:9-15

II. NINEVEH'S DOOM DESCRIBED, 2

A. The Death of a City, 2:1-10

B. The Death of a Lion, 2:11-13

III. NINEVEH'S DOOM DESERVED, 3

A. Turn About Is Fair Play, 3:1-7

B. Re-runs of Future Judgment, 3:8-11

C. The Catastrophe Without Mourners, 3:12-19

Nineveh: The Sequel

Nahum 1:1-8

OPENING
up to the Word

What are your favorite sequel movies, and which do you think were the worst?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What other minor prophet features Nineveh as a major interest?
 2. Although God takes vengeance on those who are evil, he is patient and wants everyone to come to repentance (vs. 2-3, 2Pe 3:9).
 3. People who trust in God can count on him to be what for them (Na 1:7)?
 4. In this passage, who is the object of God's vengeance and anger (v. 8)?
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LIVING
out the Word

1. In the sequel of your life in Christ that God is now writing, what are some of the major differences with the life you once led?
2. How has God been a refuge for you in times of trouble? Do you trust him to care for you (v. 7)?

Grave News for Nineveh

DAY 25

Nahum 1:9-15

Have you ever walked through a cemetery and looked at all the headstones? Did you wonder about the lives these deceased people had once lived?

1. What do you think Nahum means by “trouble will not come a second time” (v. 9)?
2. What type of legacy does God promise to Nineveh and her inhabitants (v. 14)?
3. Someone was coming to Judah with some good news for a change (v. 15). Who was coming, and what was their good news?
4. Does verse 15 bring to mind any other bearers of good news (Ro 10:15)?

1. If you were to write an epitaph for your own life, what would you want it to say?
2. How different would that epitaph be if it had to be written tomorrow, and why? What role does Jesus play in writing your legacy?

“Trouble will not come a second time” (v. 9). Although Sennacherib, king of the Assyrians, failed to destroy Jerusalem at his first attempt, he kept plotting its demise. But God decreed that Assyria would never trouble Judah again. Sennacherib and the Assyrians never conquered Judah, or took Jerusalem. **“From you, O Nineveh, has one come forth”** (v. 11) may refer to Sennacherib or another Assyrian king. **“The feet of one who brings good news”** (v. 15) pictures someone coming with the good news that the capital of Assyria had fallen and the city of Nineveh was destroyed—something that had not happened yet. Nineveh’s final destruction was so complete that it was never rebuilt.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

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LIVING

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WINDOW

on the Word

The Death of a City

Nahum 2:1-10

OPENING
up to the Word

In great wars many prominent and even ancient cities are destroyed in a matter of days. Can you think of examples from the last two world wars?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What color were the shields of the advancing army (v. 3)? Why do you think Nahum mentioned this fact?
 2. Nahum used vivid pictures to describe the city's invasion by enemy armies (vs. 3-4). What can you learn about the invader's weapons from these passages?
 3. Sennacherib, the king of the Assyrians, summoned his best troops to defend the city, yet what was the result (vs. 5-6)? How did the enemy break through the city gates?
 4. What was an attractive target of the invading armies (vs. 9-10)?
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LIVING
out the Word

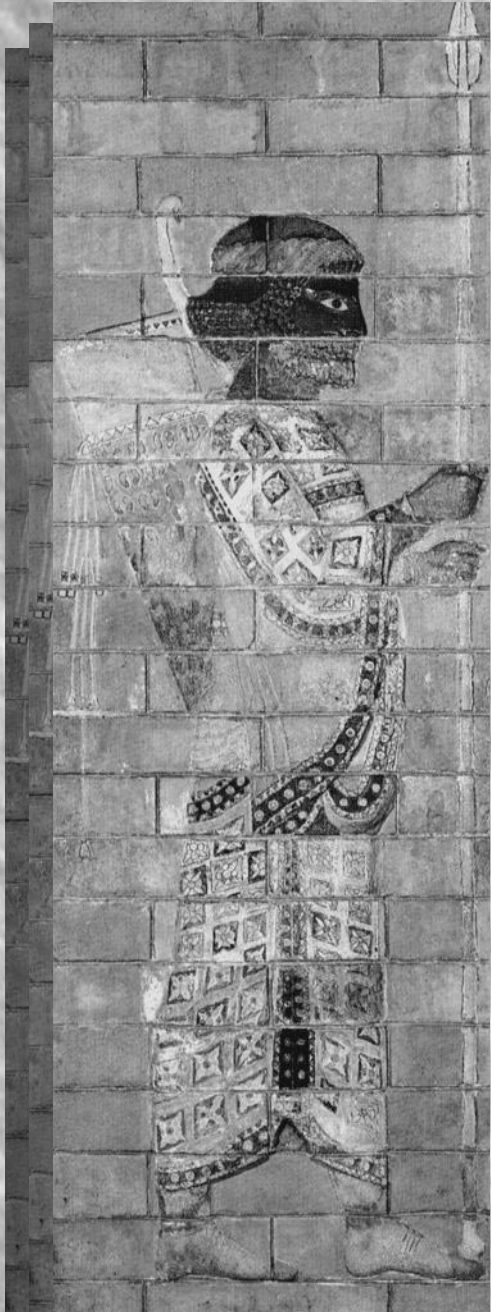
1. Have you ever seen something destroyed that you thought would be around forever? What was it?
 2. Why do you think we often harbor sentimental feelings for buildings and other inanimate objects?
 3. What is your favorite possession, and why does it hold such value to you?
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WINDOW
on the Word

***"An attacker advances"** (v. 1). The attacker was Nabopolassar the Babylonian, along with Cyaxeres the Mede. Together they conquered Nineveh. **"The shields...are red"** (v. 3). The shields of the invading Medes and Persians were red, either from blood of the Ninevites, or dyed red. The ancient Greek general and historian Xenophon writes that the Persian army had scarlet uniforms.*

*“An attacker
advances
against you,
Nineveh.
Guard the
fortress,
watch the
road, brace
yourselves,
marshal all
your
strength!”*

Nahum 2:1



Persian archer from the time of Artaxerxes II

The Death of a Lion

Nahum 2:11-13

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever seen a lion up close? What do you see in the lion that deserves the title, King of Beasts?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Who do you think Nahum is referring to when he speaks about a lion (v. 11)? What is the lion's den?
2. What were some characteristics of the lion's activity, and how might that resemble a human kingdom (vs. 11-12)?
3. As you read verse 12, what do you think Nahum is describing about the Assyrians through this image of the lion's activity?
4. Why do you think Nahum uses the imagery of a lion to describe Nineveh and the Assyrians (vs. 11-12)?
5. In verse 13 God combines the imagery of lions and armies. Why do you think he does this?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Sometimes our lives and positions are turned upside down, and we lose power or authority. Has this ever happened to you?
2. When you lost position, power or authority, was it a result of something you said or did, or of outside influences beyond your control?

WINDOW
on the Word

***The lion's den** (v. 11). Assyrian kings frequently likened themselves to lions, and engaged in lion hunts. Lions were frequently pictured in Assyrian decorations. Sennacherib had boasted "like a lion, I raged." This makes Nahum's imagery of a lion for Assyria appropriate.*

*“Where now is the lions’
den, the place where they
fed their young, where
the lion and lioness
went, and the cubs, with
nothing to fear?”*

Nahum 2:11



Turnabout Is Fair Play

Nahum 3:1-7

OPENING
up to the Word

When someone commits a heinous crime, the penalty for that crime is usually severe. What are the worst penalties meted out for criminals in the state, province or territory in which you live?

DIGGING
into the Word

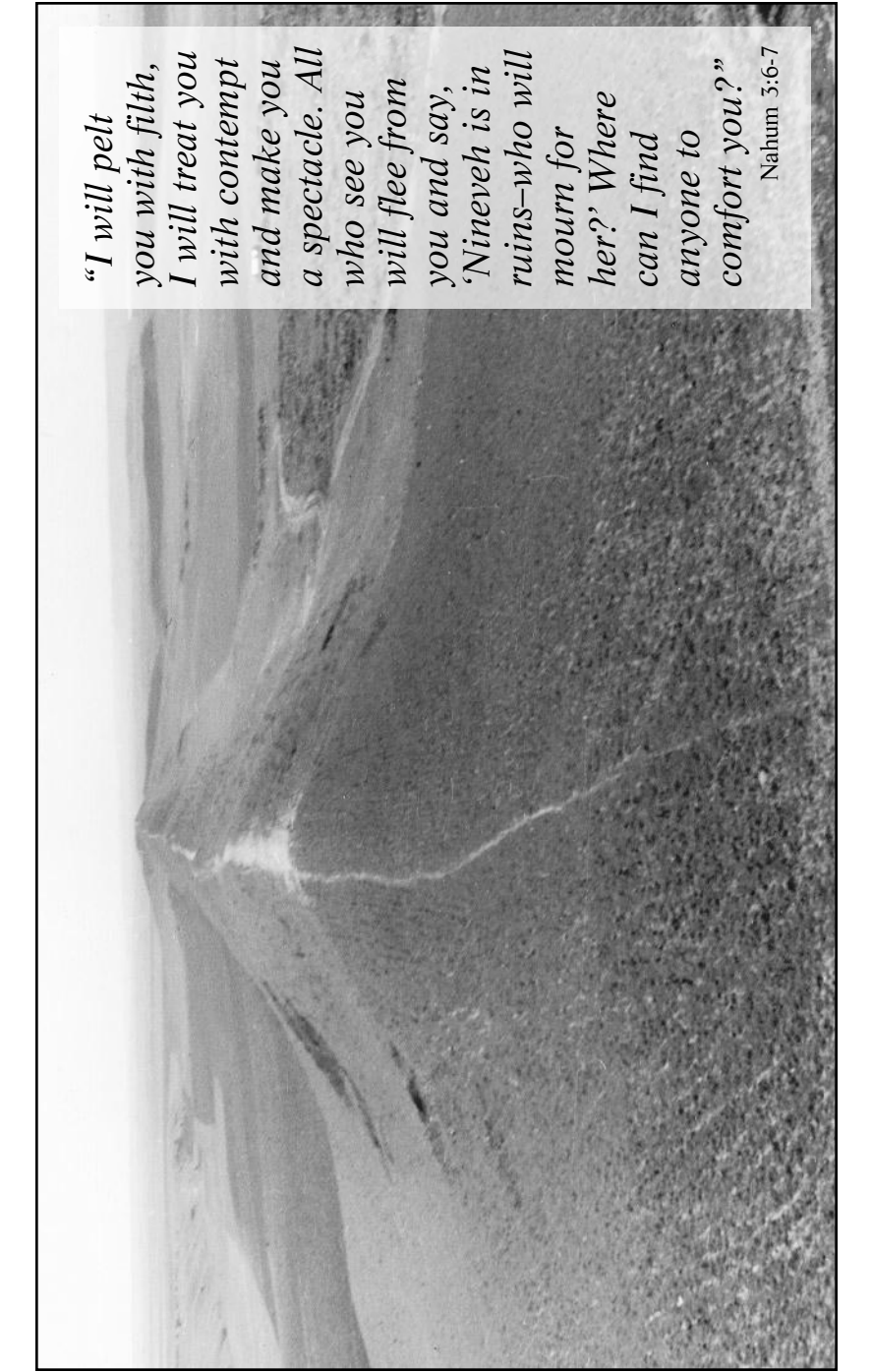
1. Read the description of the Assyrian armies in verses 2-3. What drove the Assyrians to their terrible deeds (v. 4)?
2. While the Assyrian army was powerful, what else did the Assyrians use to enslave people (v. 4)?
3. Why does God use the image of nakedness to speak of Assyria's future shame (v. 5)?
4. Two questions that God poses have no answer (v. 7). What are those two questions?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What is the worst penalty you've ever endured for something you've done?
2. Do you think the punishment was fair or unfair? Why?
3. Who is to blame for the punishment you have experienced and endured? (a) yourself, (b) someone else, (c) circumstances, (d) God, (e) no one.

WINDOW
on the Word

City of blood (v. 1) is an apt description for Nineveh. The Assyrians were known for cutting off enemies' body parts, gouging out eyes, removing heads, and then attaching them to vines, or piling them up by the city gates. Captives were also impaled alive, or whipped till their skin was almost gone. They were a truly bloodthirsty people.



*“I will pelt
you with filth,
I will treat you
with contempt
and make you
a spectacle. All
who see you
will flee from
you and say,
‘Nineveh is in
ruins—who will
mourn for
her?’ Where
can I find
anyone to
comfort you?”*

Nahum 3:6-7

Re-runs of Future Judgment

Nahum 3:8-11

OPENING
up to the Word

Of all the shows on television, which do you think has been seen the most? What do you think accounts for its longevity and popularity?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Where was Thebes, and why did Nahum refer to that city (v. 8)?
2. What was Thebes' natural defense (v. 8)? (a) a huge army, (b) it was surrounded by water, (c) great walls, (d) poison arrows.
3. Who were Thebes' allies, and why do you think they were mentioned (v. 9)?
4. What horrible atrocities were committed on the people of Thebes (v. 10), and who committed them?
5. What did Nineveh have to look forward to for her part in these matters (v. 11)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What part of your past would you most like to re-live again, and why?
2. Is there an event in your past that you mentally re-run again and again? Is it healthy viewing, or does it cause despair?
3. Sometimes we choose to re-live a past event with the hope that we will never repeat it. Is there such an event in your life? As you think of this past failure, re-read Philippians 3:13 and 2 Corinthians 5:17.

WINDOW
on the Word

*Ironically, **Thebes**, an Egyptian city (v. 8), had been captured and ransacked by the Assyrians in 663 B.C., even though it had excellent defenses with moats, canals and water channels throughout the city. Thebes' alliances with Cush, Put and Libya were powerful, and they surrounded her. Yet, even they could not stop the Assyrians. The Assyrians committed all their usual atrocities on the Thebans.*

The Catastrophe Without Mourners

DAY 30

Nahum 3:12-19

In every great catastrophe or war, people are devastated, and later the event and the loss are a source of mourning. Has a catastrophe of some kind ever caused you to mourn?

1. Nineveh's fortresses were likened to (v. 12): (a) an impenetrable wall, (b) a large rock, (c) an insurmountable obstacle, (d) fig trees.
2. Nahum called the Assyrian troops *women* (v. 13). Do you think he was using figurative or literal language, and why?
3. Using the image of locusts, what would Assyria's guards and officials do (v. 17)?
4. To what king might Nahum be referring in this verse (v. 18)?
5. What would be the reaction of other nations to the fall of Nineveh (v. 19)? (a) clapping and celebration, (b) confusion, (c) sadness, (d) apathy.

1. Has something bad ever happened to you that made other people happy? What was it? What were the circumstances?
2. Why do you think your catastrophe was such good news to them?
3. If the same catastrophe had occurred to them instead of you, how do you think you would have reacted? How do you think you should react? (Pro 24:17-18)?

Fig trees (v. 12). *When figs ripen in the spring they fall easily to the ground. Similarly, Nineveh's great defenses would also fall to their conquerors. The **King of Assyria** (v. 18) could be King Sinshar-ishkum (ruling in 612 B.C.) or possibly King Ashur-uballit (ruling from 612-609 B.C.) who held the Assyrian Empire together from the Syrian city of Haran until 609 B.C., three years after Nineveh fell.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

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