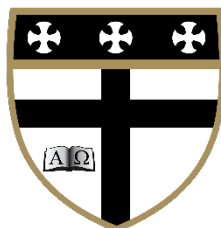


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A HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

“Nahum’s Prophecy: A Prologue to the New Testament”¹

by

Roderick O. Ford, Litt.D., LL.D.

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Roderick O. Ford, D.Litt. (Law & Religion)



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² Roderick O. Ford, *The Apostolate Papers* (unpublished research papers, 2015 to 2022). www.roderickford.org.

Introduction

The Prophet Nahum was a poet, historian, and Hebrew theologian.

Nahum was from the town of El-koshite.³ His name means “comforter.”⁴ But little else is known about Nahum or his personal history.

His Book of Nahum is a work of political theory and political science—placing the Almighty LORD God of the Hebrews at the center of world history. This great book is a work of poetry.⁵

The Book of Nahum is also a work of history that describes the fall of Assyria, one of the world’s great empires. And it is great work of theology that describes divine Providence; the nature of God; and God’s relationship to all of mankind.

According to *The Jewish Study Bible*, the Book of Nahum “is also, in the main, a pronouncement against Nineveh. From the reader’s viewpoint Nineveh was both a historical city, the capital of the Assyrian empire, and a symbol of a sinful, overbearing, exceedingly oppressive political structure that was totally destroyed in the late 7th c. BCE and never rebuilt. From the perspective of a readership well aware of the fall of Nineveh, such a descent from the pinnacle of glory and might becomes a paradigmatic example for the fate of worldly, powerful oppressors and, above all, of even greater power of the LORD who brings them down. As such, the book provides a message of hope and trust in YHVH to those who saw themselves as oppressed by their own ‘Nineveh.’”⁶

According to Augustine of Hippo’s *The City of God*,⁷ Nahum prophesies Christ where he writes, “Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace!”⁸

³ Nahum 1:1.

⁴ “Nahum,” Wikipedia (online encyclopedia): <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nahum>. (Significantly, “[Nahum] wrote about the end of the Assyrian Empire, and its capital city, Nineveh, in a vivid poetic style.”)

⁵ “Nahum,” Wikipedia (online encyclopedia): <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nahum>.

⁶ *The Jewish Study Bible* (second edition), p. 1207.

⁷ St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 636.

⁸ Nahum 1:1 [NIV].

Chapter One

Divine Providence and the Nature of God

The topic of the Book of Nahum is social justice or divine punishment or political theory. God is going to destroy the capital city of Nineveh and the Assyrian empire.

But, first, the Prophet Nahum assures his audience that the LORD God who shall bring forth this destruction is a loving, just, and patient God:

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.⁹

But God is also a protector of the oppressed, the innocent, and those who call on him. For this reason, the LORD God will not for a very long time allow oppressors to thrive from their oppressions and oppressive dominions—he will overthrow them, to wit:

The LORD is good,
a refuge in times of trouble.

He cares for those who trust in him,
but with an overwhelming flood

⁹ Nahum 1:2-3 [NIV].

he will make an end of Nineveh;
he will pursue his foes into the realm of darkness.

Whatever they plot against the LORD
he will bring to an end;
trouble will not come a second time.

They will be entangled among thorns
and drunk from their wine;
they will be consumed like dry stubble.¹⁰

The Prophet Nahum then presents God's divine Providence as a form of universal jurisdiction over all nations. Just as the Almighty LORD God had punished the great Egyptian empire, so He would now punish the great Assyrian empire, to wit:

Are you better than Thebes ["populous No"],¹¹
situated on the Nile,
with water around her?

The river was her defense,
the waters her wall.

Cush and Egypt were her boundless strength;
Put and Libya were among her allies.

Yet she was taken captive
and went into exile.

Her infants were dashed to pieces
at every street corner.

Lots were cast for her nobles,
and all her great men were put in chains.

You too will become drunk;

¹⁰ Nahum 1:7-10 [NIV].

¹¹ See, King James Version.

you will go into hiding
and seek refuge from the enemy.¹²

Here we find the God of the Hebrews being described as a universal God of all mankind, who exercises divine Providence through a universal jurisdiction over all human affairs, avenging the oppressed and pulling down the strongholds of oppressors.

¹² Nahum 3:8-11 [NIV].

Chapter Two

The Sins and Condemnation of Nineveh (Assyria)

What did Nineveh and the Assyrian kingdom do to deserve the divine punishment that is now being prophesied in the Book of Nahum?

In chapter three, Nahum lucidly answers this question as follows:

Woe to the city of blood,
full of lies,
full of plunder,
never without victims!

The crack of whips,
the clatter of wheels,
galloping horses
and jolting chariots!

Charging cavalry,
flashing swords
and glittering spears!

Many casualties,
piles of dead,
bodies without number,
people stumbling over the corpses—
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.¹³

The Prophet Nahum here describes an enslavement of nations through “the wanton lust of a prostitute”¹⁴ or “the multitudes of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured

¹³ Nahum 3:1-4 [NIV].

¹⁴ Nahum 3:4 [NIV].

harlot,”¹⁵ which is a description of the spiritual state of nations thus described in the Book of Revelation, as follows:

And there came one of the seven angels... saying... I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication.... And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.... And the woman which thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.¹⁶

The Book of Revelation further states that “all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”¹⁷

The Book of Nahum says something quite similar, stating “[y]ou have increased the number of your merchants till they are more than the stars of the sky, but like locusts they strip the land and then fly away”¹⁸ and “[t]hou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away.”¹⁹

But God will humiliate and defeat this harlot. As the Prophet Nahum writes, “I am against you,” declares the LORD Almighty. I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your shame.”²⁰

In the Book of Revelation, there is a biblical figure called “The Word of God... and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF

¹⁵ Nahum 3:4 [KJV].

¹⁶ Revelation 17:1-18 [KJV].

¹⁷ Revelation 18:3 [KJV].

¹⁸ Nahum 3:16 [NIV].

¹⁹ Nahum 3:16 [KJV].

²⁰ Nahum 3:5 [NIV].

LORDS”²¹ who “hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.”²²

Similarly, in the Book of Nahum, there is a description of “one who brings good news” and who is “an attacker [who] advances against... Nineveh,” to wit:

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.²³

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

The LORD will **restore the splendor of Jacob**
like the splendor of Israel,
though destroyers have laid them waste
and have ruined their vines.²⁴

According to Augustine of Hippo, this passage of Scripture (i.e., Nahum 1:14-15; Nahum 2:1-2) is a prophecy about Christ.²⁵ The restoration of the house of Jacob “like the splendor of Israel” prefigures the institution of Church under Christ’s leadership.²⁶

²¹ Revelation 19: 13, 16 [KJV].

²² Revelation 19:2 [KJV].

²³ Nahum 1:15 [NIV].

²⁴ Nahum 2:1-2 [NIV].

²⁵ St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 636-637.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

In *The City of God*, Augustine writes, “[l]et him that remembers the gospel call to mind who hath ascended from hell and breathed the Holy Spirit in the face of Judah, that is, the Jewish disciples; for they belong to the New Testament, whose festival days are so spiritually renewed that they cannot become antiquated. Moreover, we already see the graven and molten things, that is, the idols of the false gods, exterminated through the gospel, and given up to oblivion as of the grave, and we know that this prophecy is fulfilled in this very thing.”²⁷

Wherefore, the sins and condemnation of Nineveh (Assyria) may be looked at from two angles: first, there is historical description given through the Prophet Nahum’s biblical account of the condemnation of Nineveh’s actual sins.

But, second, the Book of Nahum maybe interpreted to mean, and describe, God’s general and universal condemnation of the sins of all nations, for all time, through His divine Providence.

State differently, just as Nineveh and Assyrian would fall, all nations would meet the same fate, and for the same reasons: national sin.

And the prime minister of God’s divine judgment and execution is none other than Jesus Christ, whom Revelation calls “The Word of God... KING OF KINGS, LORD OF LORDS”²⁸ and whom the Prophet Nahum describes as “there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, and fulfill your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed.”²⁹

²⁷ St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 636-637. [NOTE: Augustine’s Latin translation of Nahum contains slightly different language. In *The City of God*, supra, p. 636, Augustine quotes Nahum 1:14 and 2:1, as follows:

“I will exterminate the graven and the molten things: I will make thy burial. For lo, the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings and announceth peace are swift upon the mountains! O Judah, celebrate thy festival days, and perform thy vows; for now they shall not go on any more so as to become antiquated. It is completed, it is consumed, it is taken away. He ascendeth who breathes in thy face, delivering thee out of tribulation.”

²⁸ Revelation 19: 13, 16 [KJV].

²⁹ Ibid. See, also, Nahum 1:15 [NIV].

Conclusion

The Assyrian empire was the first great empire in world civilization,³⁰ having lasted from the 21st-century to the 7th-century, B.C. Nineveh was one of its great cities and, from the period 705 to 612 BC, served as the capital of the Assyrian empire.

Whereas the Book of Jonah presents the city of Nineveh as “the Church of the Gentiles,”³¹ about a 100 years later, the Book of Nahum presents this same city as being representative of nations enslaved to a great harlot.

The Prophet Nahum thus prophesied the fall of Nineveh and the Assyrian empire, because of their national sins of innocent blood, lies, plunder, oppression, **merchants**, and “wanton lust of a harlot... who enslaved nations by her prostitution.”³² The Book of Nahum thus describes the nature of God and His divine Providence over the nations, which prefigures the final triumph of Christ over, inter alia, national sin!³³

Look, there on the mountains,
The feet of one who brings good news,
Who proclaims peace!
Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, and fulfill your vows.
No more will the wicked invade you;
They will be completely destroyed.³⁴

THE END

³⁰ “The Assyrian Empire: The First True Empire,” <https://www.banknoteworld.com/blog/assyrian-empire-the-first-true-empire/> (“With vast territories stretching from modern-day Iran to Egypt, a centralized government and network, a powerful military, advanced writing systems, buildings, and irrigation systems, the Assyrian Empire was considered to be the first true empire.”).

³¹ St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 654.

³² Nahum 3:4 [NIV].

³³ See, e.g., Rev. 17:1 (“the great whore”); Rev. 18:3 (“all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her”); Rev. 20:10 (“[a]nd the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever”); Rev. 21:2 (“the holy city, new Jerusalem”); Rev. 21:4 (“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”)

³⁴ Nahum 1:15 [NIV], foreshadowing The Book of Revelation, Chapters 21-22.

APPENDIX A

ASSYRIA

c. 2025- 609 BC

Notable kings of the Assyrian City-State, Kingdom, and Empire³⁵

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| • c. 2025 BC | Puzur-Ashur I (first) |
| • c. 1974–1935 BC | Erishum I |
| • c. 1808–1776 BC | Shamshi-Adad I |
| • c. 1700–1691 BC | Bel-bani |
| • c. 1363–1328 BC | Ashur-uballit I |
| • c. 1243–1207 BC | Tukulti-Ninurta I |
| • 1114–1076 BC | Tiglath-Pileser I |
| • 883–859 BC | Ashurnasirpal II |
| • 745–727 BC | Tiglath-Pileser III |
| • 705–681 BC | Sennacherib ³⁶ |

³⁵ “Assyria,” Wikipedia (online encyclopedia): <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria>.

³⁶ The Ten Tribes of the northern Kingdom of Israel went into captivity to the Assyrian empire in 722 B.C. during the reign of Sennacherib. During this period, the city of Rome was founded in Italy. St. Augustine ties this history together in *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 630-631, stating:

When Romulus reigned, Thales the Milesian is said to have lived, being one of the seven sages.... During that time the ten tribes, which on the division of the people were called Israel, were conquered by the Chaldeans and led captive into their lands, while the two tribes were called Judah, and had the seat of their kingdom in Jerusalem, remained in the land of Judea.... Numa reigned after Romulus.... They report that

- The Book of Hosea
- Prophet Hosea
- King of Israel Hoshea (2 Kings 15:30; 17: 1-6), last king of Israel
- Northern Kingdom of Israel goes into captivity to the Assyrian Empire in 722 B.C.

• 681–669 BC Esarhaddon

• 669–631 BC Ashurbanipal

- **The Book of Nahum**

- **Prophet Nahum**

- **King of Judah Josiah (2 Kings 22:2; 2 Chronicles 34:2)**

• 612–609 BC **Ashur-uballit II** (last king of Assyria; fall of Nineveh and Assyria)

the Samian sibyle lived while he reigned at Rome, and when Manasse began to reign over the Hebrews—
an impious king, by whom the prophet Isaiah is said to have been slain.

Appendix B

St. Augustine of Hippo’s <i>The City of God</i> Parallel Histories of ancient Israel and the Assyrian Kingdom	
ISRAEL <u>History of the Church</u> (i.e., the “City of God” ³⁷ or “Catholic” ³⁸ unity)	ASSYRIA <u>History of the City of Man</u> (i.e., “Babylon” or Confusion) ³⁹
Abraham	Nimus (1 st King of Assyria) ⁴⁰
Isaac	Aralius (5 th King of Assyria) ⁴¹
Esau and Jacob	Xerxes (Balaeus)(9 th King of Assyria) ⁴²

³⁷ Ibid. See, also, Psalm 87:3 (“Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.”)

³⁸ Ibid., p. 660 (“[T]he promised Holy Spirit. It was given as the chief and most necessary sign of His coming on those who had believed, that every one of them spoke in the tongues of all nations; thus signifying that the unity of the catholic Church would embrace all nations, and would in like manner speak in all tongues.”)

³⁹ Ibid., p. 527 (“Therefore the name of it is called Confusion.... This city, which was called Confusion, is the same as Babylon, whose wonderful construction Gentile history also notices. For Babylon means Confusion.”)

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 610-611.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 611.

⁴² Ibid., p. 612.

Jacob Joseph	Xerxes (Balaeus)(9 th King of Assyria) ⁴³
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death of Joseph 	Mamitus (12 th King of Assyria) ⁴⁴
Moses (birth) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During Life of Moses 	Ascatades (King of Assyria) ⁴⁵
Joshua	Amyntas (King of Assyria) ⁴⁶
Judges	Fables of the Greek gods invented; the Trojan War; ⁴⁷ Augustine describes these fables as “so great delusion wrought by the demons.” ⁴⁸

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 614.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 614 - 618.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 620-626.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 623.

<p>Eli the Priest</p> <p>Samuel- Priest and Prophet</p> <p>King David</p>	<p>Oneus (29th King of Assyria)⁴⁹</p> <p>“That greatest of all kingdoms, the Assyrian, had its long duration brought to a close in his time, the time of Rome’s birth drawing nigh. For the Assyrian empire was transferred to the Medes after nearly thirteen hundred and five years....”⁵⁰ City state of Rome was then founded.⁵¹</p> <p>Augustine writes, “[t]hat Rome was founded when the Assyrian kingdom perished, at which time Hezekiah reigned in Judah.”⁵²</p>
<p>King Hezekiah (Judah)</p> <p>King Joash (Israel)</p> <p>The Book of Hosea thus begins, “The Word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beer, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.”</p>	<p>Augustine writes, “[t]hat Rome was founded when the Assyrian kingdom perished, at which time Hezekiah reigned in Judah.”⁵³</p>

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 626.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 627.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 627.

⁵² Ibid., p. 628.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 628.

King Josiah (Judah), reigned c. 640 to 609

BC.

The Book of Nahum written; Nahum the
Prophet lived and prophesied.

Assyrian empire (capital city of Nineveh)
collapsed in c. 612- 609 BC

THE END

