



5

God Judges Nations

Key Theme

- God used men to record His words.

Key Passages

- Nahum 1:1–8, 1:14, 2:13, 3:7; Jonah 1:1–2, 3:5, 3:10

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the source of the message of Nahum.
- Connect the books of Jonah and Nahum.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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Students will practice the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet using the letter clues. If time allows, they will recite the verse to a partner or to the teacher using only the letter clues.



Activity 1: God Judges Nations Class Notes

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Students will fill out the God Judges Nations Class Notes as you study the lesson. Pass out the class notes before you begin to teach.



Studying God's Word

page 5

The Lord's wrath burned against the wicked Assyrians. But before He destroyed them, He sent His prophet Nahum to the capital city of Nineveh to warn them of God's judgment. The people would not repent like they had when Jonah came 100 years earlier. So God used another nation to destroy Nineveh and the Assyrians.



Activity 2: Nahum or Jonah?

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Divide students into two teams—Team Jonah and Team Nahum. As you read statements about Nineveh, the teams will determine if the statement occurred while the prophet they represent was in Nineveh. If so, someone on the team will hold up the sign.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print the Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



GOD JUDGES NATIONS CLASS NOTES

- Print one God Judges Nations Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- God Judges Nations Class Notes
- God Judges Nations Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print and cut out one set of 11 Mini-Posters from the Resource DVD-ROM.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Mini-Posters
- Tape or poster putty



NAHUM OR JONAH?

- Print one Nahum or Jonah? Questions Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Print one Nahum Sign and one Jonah Sign from the Resource DVD-ROM.

- Nahum or Jonah? Questions Sheet
- Nahum and Jonah Signs



Memory Verse

Isaiah 42:8 I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

God works throughout history to accomplish His plans. Nineveh arose as the capital of the powerful nation Assyria. Assyria was a growing power in the region and had taken control of a major portion of the Middle East. God was aware that Nineveh was a wicked city and that evil was pervasive throughout the empire. In His kindness to the heathen nation, God sent Jonah to proclaim a message of judgment against Nineveh and the Assyrians (Jonah 1:2). Jonah's message was received by the people of Nineveh. Even the king responded in repentance (Jonah 3:6–9). God saw that they had turned from their evil ways, and in His mercy, He spared the city (Jonah 3:10).

Their affection for God and His laws did not last long, however. Within 100 years, Nineveh had returned to idolatry. The king at that time was seeking to magnify his own name over God's.

Enter Nahum—at a time in history when Assyria, at the height of its power, was hated and feared by all nations. God used Nahum to deliver a prophecy of doom concerning Assyria: “The Lord has given a command concerning you: ‘Your name shall be perpetuated no longer. Out of the house of your gods I will cut off the carved image and the molded image. I will dig your grave, for you are vile’” (Nahum 1:14). God hated the cruelty, sin, and idolatry of the Assyrian nation and was about to smash it.

So now God's judgment was coming on Assyria because of their wickedness and sinfulness. But wait a minute! God was going to judge Assyria for her cruelty and sin, and yet they carried out His will, His judgment on the Israelite nation when they conquered the Northern Kingdom. It had been God's plan that Assyria overthrow Israel and deport them. It doesn't appear just that God would then turn around and judge the Assyrian nation who carried out His will against Israel.

But God can do no wrong. His plans are perfect, and whatever He does is fair and just and righteous. Although we often don't understand what He does in the Bible and throughout history, we must never accuse God of doing wrong. As Abraham said to God before He judged Sodom, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25).

The Israelites willingly rejected God and turned to worshipping false gods—their judgment was just. The Assyrians willingly attacked another nation and took it

captive, fulfilling their own evil desires for power. Each side sinned, and God used this sin to accomplish His plans without sinning Himself. We could say that God uses sin sinlessly. Just as God warned Israel to return to Him but judged them by sending Assyria to conquer them when they refused to repent, He then used Nahum to warn Nineveh of coming judgment. They chose not to repent, so God judged them by sending another nation, the Babylonians, to satisfy His judgment on them.

Under the leadership of Nabopolassar, the Babylonians rose and conquered the Assyrians about 100 years after they had overthrown Israel. This occurred only about 25 years after Nahum's writing and prophecy of this very judgment.

In most cases throughout the Bible, the judgment delivered by God came at the hand of other people. He delivered the message through people and brought the judgment through people. We are aware, of course, of notable exceptions where God sent fire from heaven (Genesis 19:24) or flooded the entire earth (Genesis 7:17), but God typically acted through people.

Again, let's remember that God can do no wrong. Although we may not always understand how and why God does certain things, He is always faithful to His own character. He cannot sin, and He always conducts His plans on the earth in a just way—in a manner that brings glory to Himself (Romans 11:36). God is in control, and we can absolutely rest in knowing that the God of all the earth does what is right—His own righteous, unchanging character demands that.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Placing Nahum in the history of Israel is a bit more difficult than most of the other prophets. For example, Amos opened his book with a detailed list of the kings in Israel and Judah reigning at the time of his prophecy. But Nahum didn't give us that historical context. We can, however, be certain of some things. Because Nahum spoke of Assyria and Nineveh in their glory, his prophecy must have been written at a time when Assyria was prospering. Up until the end of the reign of Ashurbanipal, who ruled Assyria from 668–626 BC, Assyria prospered. We also know that Nineveh was overthrown by Nabopolassar in 626 BC, which was the judgment Nahum prophesied about.

The other interesting tidbit in the text is that Nahum calls himself an Elkoshite, indicating where he might

be from (Nahum 1:1). There are several different possibilities for this location. One is Al Qosh in Iraq, so it is possible that Nahum or his parents were among those exiled from Israel in 721 and resettled in the north of the Assyrian territories. With all of this in mind, Nahum likely delivered his prophecy against Nineveh around 650 BC at the height of Assyria's power. God used a nation that He prospered to bring judgment upon Israel. And eventually, that nation would be overthrown by the Babylonians who would capture Jerusalem, taking the remainder of God's people captive.

Remember, only about 150 years passed from the time of Jonah—when the entire city of Nineveh repented—to Nahum and his prophecy. And the fall of Nineveh came only about 25 years after the prophetic proclamation from God through Nahum.

What a reminder of how quickly an entire nation can rebel against God. Or a family! Or a person! Because God is jealous for His own name, He will not leave unbelief and rebellion unpunished. Only in Christ does anyone have hope of being forgiven of rebellion against God. God shows His kindness in sending a call to repentance in the face of judgment

(Romans 2:4). Also, Jesus has shown us the kindness of God by placing Himself in our place—trading our sins for His perfection. What a glorious truth to proclaim to others and to cherish in our own hearts.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord, you are the Creator of the universe. You alone deserve my worship and praise. You warned your people and called them to repentance before you brought destruction. You showed them your kindness. In the same way, you are kind to give us your Word to show us the way to be saved from your wrath through Jesus. O, how I love Him and the truth of your Word! I want to take your warnings and your Word and the gospel to my family and friends and beyond, as Nahum did. Help me to impart these important truths to my class this week.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



God Judges Nations Class Notes

MATERIALS

- God Judges Nations Class Notes
- God Judges Nations Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will be completing these class notes as we study the Bible passages. Try not to work ahead. Fill in the blanks as we come to them. I'll let you know when to fill in something.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes and lesson today, we will learn more about God and see how He dealt with the wicked nation of Assyria.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Last week we learned that God finally used the wicked nation of Assyria to destroy the northern kingdom of Israel because Israel would not turn back to Him. Now God was going to punish and judge the nation of Assyria. They carried out God's will when they conquered Israel, but they did not love the Lord. They did not worship Him alone. And God cannot tolerate sin of any kind. The Assyrians were a mean, evil, and wicked

- Use the History of Israel Poster included with your teacher kit to show your class where the biblical accounts you study chronologically fit into this timeline.

people. The city of Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. That city may sound familiar to you because it is where God sent the prophet Jonah about 100 years earlier after a stop into the belly of a great fish.

We are going to read from the book of Nahum. Nahum was one of the prophets God used to speak God's Word and warn the people of God's coming judgment. *Refer to the Roles of the Prophets Poster.* We will read Nahum 1:1–8. *Assign readers.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? Who was Nahum's prophecy against? *Nahum 1:1. Nineveh.*

That's right. God sent Nahum to speak judgment against Nineveh. But before he gave God's warning, Nahum told us a little bit about God. We are going to find out what Nahum said. We'll answer the question, What is God like? *Put mini-poster #1 on the board.*

? Nahum 1:2 tells us three things about God. Let's read that verse again and see if we can find the three things. *Allow discussion.*

Put mini-posters #2, #4, and #6 on the board as you discuss. God is jealous. The Lord avenges. The Lord is furious. He is jealous. He avenges. He is furious.

? Wow! That doesn't sound very good, does it? And this is just the start. Let's take a minute to figure out what all this means. What does it mean that God is jealous? *Allow discussion. It means He wants all praise and glory to go to Him alone. He is the Creator of everything—He deserves all our worship. Place mini-poster #3 next to the "He is jealous" mini-poster.*

? What about avenge? What does the Bible mean when it says God avenges? *Allow discussion. Avenge means to punish. This verse says He avenges. It means God punishes. We know that to be true, right? Place mini-poster #5 next to the "He avenges" mini-poster.*

? And the word furious, what does that mean? *Allow discussion. That means He is angry! Please mini-poster #7 next to the "He is furious" mini-poster.*

? So we know God is furious, He is angry, and that He must avenge or punish sin. Yet what does Nahum 1:3 say about God's anger? *He is slow to anger. Place mini-poster #8, "But He is slow to anger" on the board.*

? Can you remember a time when God showed that He was slow to anger? *Allow discussion. Refer to Lessons 2, 3, 4 Lesson Theme Posters.*

Remember? After the nation of Israel divided into two nations, the northern kingdom of Israel had wicked, sinful kings for 250 years! God warned and warned them. But they wouldn't listen. For 250 years God showed them and us that He is slow to anger. But, He finally had to punish them because they just wouldn't repent and change their ways.

- ? Someone read Nahum 1:4–5 again. What does God rebuke? *The sea.*
- ? What does God dry up? *The rivers.*
- ? What will quake before Him? *The mountains and the hills.*

So according to this, God controls and rebukes the sea and the rivers. Remember the Red Sea? He opened it up and the Israelites walked across on dry land. And the earth often shakes and trembles with earthquakes and volcanoes! This shaking is caused by the Lord's awesome power!

- ? What is the attribute of God that describes His power—His amazing power? *Omnipotent. Place mini-poster #9 on the board.*

God is all-powerful. And what we just read confirms that He is all-powerful. He rebukes the sea and makes the mountains quake. *Place mini-poster #10 on the board opposite "He is omnipotent—all powerful."*

OK. Now, using the information up here on the board, let's complete #1 through #4 on your class notes. 1) alone; 2) punishes; 3) angry, slow; 4) omnipotent, sea, mountains.

Discover the Truth

God spoke through prophets to Israel and other nations. God's Word tells us much about His character, who He is, how great He is, and why we should fear Him. He is jealous for His glory and will get it. He will punish sin, but is slow to anger. His power is over all things. He is the great omnipotent Creator of the universe.



OMNIPOTENT
(Refer to Attributes Poster)

➤ Call on individual students to read and complete the statements as you review what God is like.

READ THE WORD

So what was God's message to Nineveh? Let's find out. Remember, Nineveh was a wicked city. And God's judgment was coming on them, just as His judgment came to Israel for their wickedness. God was angry with these people who did not love Him or honor His name. Let's read Nahum 1:14. Someone read that for me. *Assign a reader.*

Nahum 1:14

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? The Lord had given a command to the Assyrians. What did God say He would cut off from them at the end of that verse? *The carved images and the molded images.*
- ? What does that refer to—carved and molded images? *Allow discussion.*
It refers to idol worship—false gods—statues and images the people worshipped instead of the true God.
- ? How will you complete #5 on your class notes? *Gods.*

Nahum 2:13

- ? What did God say He would dig in that same verse? *He will dig their grave.*
- ? And why was God's judgment coming to these people? It's at the very end of the verse. *They were vile.*

- ? Does anyone know what vile means? *Allow discussion.*

Vile means they were awful to God. They were sinners and God cannot stand sin!

- ? How will you complete #6 on your class notes? *Vile.*

Let's move on. Turn to Nahum 2:13. Someone read that please. *Assign a reader.*

- ? Who was against the people of Nineveh and Assyria? *The Lord of hosts.*

- ? What was the Lord going to do? *Burn their chariots.*

God was not going to be patient with Assyria any longer. The powerful nation was soon to be destroyed. And it would be the Lord Himself who would silence them.

- ? Now look at #7 on your class notes. What can we put in there? Who was against the Assyrians? *Lord.*

Nahum 3:7

One more verse from the book of Nahum to read today. Turn to Nahum 3:7. *Assign a reader.*

- ? What will happen to the great city of Nineveh? *It will be laid waste.*

- ? How will you complete #8 on your class notes? *Waste.*

Discover the Truth

Nahum brought the message of doom to Nineveh. The Lord of hosts had spoken. Though He is slow to anger—He will finally judge sin. God is jealous for His name and His glory. He will not stand for carved images, wooden statues, or false gods. The people of Nineveh and Assyria would not give God the glory due His name. And Nineveh would be destroyed. The city would be laid waste!



READ THE WORD

- ? So, what else had happened in the city of Nineveh? Who else had God sent to Nineveh? It happened about 100 years before Nahum. *Allow discussion.*

? I mentioned it earlier. It had to do with a big fish, the sea, and someone being swallowed by the fish! *God sent Jonah to Nineveh!*

Let's compare what happened in Nineveh when Jonah went to what happened when Nahum went 100 years later. Turn back in your Bibles a few pages to the book of Jonah. We will read Jonah 1:1–2. *Assign a reader.*

Jonah 1:1–2

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? Where did God send Jonah? Jonah 1:1. *To Nineveh.*

? Why did God send Jonah to Nineveh? What kind of city was Nineveh? *Jonah 1:2. A great city.*

? It was a great city. But how were the people there? *Jonah 1:2. Wicked.*

That's right. God sent Jonah to Nineveh. The city was great and the people were wicked. Turn to Jonah 3:5. This tells us how the city reacted to Jonah's warning from God. Will someone read that for me? *Assign a reader.*

Jonah 3:5

? What did the people do after Jonah spoke to them? *They believed.*

? And someone turn to Jonah 3:10 and read that for me. *Assign a reader.*

Jonah 3:10

? What did God see? *They turned from their evil ways.*

? And what did God do? *He did not bring disaster to the city.*

Discover the Truth

So God sent Jonah to Nineveh 100 years before He sent Nahum. When Jonah went the entire city turned back to God and turned away from their evil ways.

? Look at your class notes. How will you complete # 9 and #10? Will someone read those for me? *9) 100. 10) Turned.*

Nineveh repented when Jonah preached to them. And just 100 years later the city had returned to their wicked ways. God sent another prophet, Nahum. But they would not return to God this time. And God destroyed Nineveh and Assyria.





Nahum or Jonah?

MATERIALS

- Nahum or Jonah? Questions Sheet
- Jonah Sign
- Nahum Sign

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide the class into two teams: Team Jonah and Team Nahum. Give each team their appropriate sign.

Read the statements on the Jonah or Nahum? Questions Sheet.

Teams will discuss if the statement refers to the prophet Jonah's ministry or the prophet Nahum's ministry to Nineveh.

Teams will hold up their sign. Discuss the answers as you go along.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

? Whose message did Jonah and Nahum bring to Nineveh? *The Lord's.*

Yes, they both brought the message to repent and turn back to the Lord or face judgment. When Jonah preached, the people listened and understood their sinfulness. Their hearts changed. But when Nahum came the second time, 100 years later, God's message was met with hard hearts. The people didn't listen, and God destroyed them, just as He said He would.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

God sent His prophets—His messengers—to record His words, so we can know who God is, and how He has worked throughout history. In the case of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, God sent two of His prophets, first Jonah and then Nahum, with similar messages. These two prophets delivered their messages 100 years apart.

First came Jonah who told the wicked people of Nineveh to repent of their sins and turn back to God or they would be destroyed. Everyone, including their king, repented and believed in the one true God. So God did not destroy them.

One hundred years later, the people of Nineveh had forgotten all about God. They were evil and vile again. But in His kindness, God sent another

warning through His prophet Nahum. Nahum reminded the people of Nineveh that God is holy and that God demands all praise and honor. He warned them that they would be destroyed unless they repented and worshipped God alone. This time the people and the king did not listen. So because God must judge sin, He sent another nation to destroy Assyria. All that the Lord said through Nahum came true.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

It seems like 100 years is a long time. But it really isn't. In just 100 years all the people of Nineveh had forgotten about God. We can learn a lot from this. First, if we aren't careful, we can forget about God, too! It's easy to get caught up in the everyday details of our lives, like school, sports, friends, plays, vacations, hobbies, games, TV, and forget all about God. God will not stand for that. God wants us to love only Him and to love Him with all our heart, mind, and strength.

Another thing we can learn is that just like God sent His Word to Nineveh through His prophets, He gives us His Word—the Bible. In it, we read about His kindness and the love He has shown by sending Jesus Christ to be the Savior from sin. We also read His warning, don't we? Just like Nahum warned Nineveh that they must repent and worship the one true God alone, God warns us. In His Word, He tells us that we are sinners, like the people of Nineveh. We also deserve God's punishment. But God provided forgiveness for sins through His Son Jesus. Jesus took our place. He was killed on the Cross so that everyone who would turn to Him in faith would be forgiven and would not face God's eternal punishment. Isn't that great news?

➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Isaiah 42:8 I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God that He is kind and loving and holy.
- Thank God because He shows us in His Word how to be saved from His judgment.
- Ask God to keep us from being distracted by the everyday details of this life and forgetting about Him.

