N.E.W. SEMINARY STUDY GUIDE

Nahum and Habakkuk: God's Mercy and Justice

Pastor Hoon Kim, 20 October 2026, Nahum 1:1

Teaching by Pastor Hoon Kim, N.E.W. Church. Transcribed with the help of AI. Shared on 15 November 2026, before its full review.

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Study guide

Core Truth

The sovereign God who exercises relentless mercy toward the repentant also executes righteous, covenant vengeance upon arrogant oppressors, calling His oppressed remnant to find refuge in Him and live by prophetic faith amidst shifting world orders.

Key Verse

“The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of distress; He cares for those who trust in Him.” Nahum 1:7 (BSB)

Background Notes

1. **The Geopolitical Crucible:** During the seventh century BC (the 600s BC), the ancient Near East experienced massive superpower transitions. The Neo-Assyrian Empire, which had conquered Northern Israel in 722 BC and besieged Jerusalem in 701 BC, entered irreversible decline after Ashurbanipal's reign. Allied forces from Babylon, Media, and Elam besieged Nineveh, destroying the city in 612 BC, fulfilling Nahum's prophecy.
2. **Covenant Jealousy (*Qanna*):** In Nahum 1:2, God's wrath and vengeance are explicitly tied to His covenant identity. Scripturally, God relates to His covenant people as a faithful husband. When foreign empires brutally exploit His people, divine vengeance is the holy, loving response of a husband intervening to defend His bride.
3. **The Heraldic Gospel (*Euangelion*):** Nahum 1:15 proclaims the "feet of him who brings good news." In ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman antiquity, *euangelion* denoted the official imperial announcement of a military triumph, the overthrow of an oppressor, or the crowning of a new ruler. The Gospel writers later adopted this term to proclaim Jesus Christ as the true cosmic King who has decisively defeated evil.

4. **Prophetic Lament and Revelation:** Habakkuk illustrates that genuine biblical faith includes honest lamentation. The prophet questions God regarding Judah's domestic violence and the moral problem of using wicked Babylon as an instrument of judgment. God answers by revealing that worldly pride carries its own doom, but "the righteous shall live by their faith" (Habakkuk 2:4).

Discussion Questions

1. **Understanding the Text:** How does understanding God as a faithful husband defending His bride transform our perspective on the terrifying language of divine vengeance in Nahum 1:2?
2. **Exploring the Themes:** Compare the endings of Jonah (Jonah 4:11) and Nahum (Nahum 3:19). How do these two books together demonstrate the perfect balance of God's holy character rather than a contradiction?
3. **Connecting Scripture:** According to Revelation 6:9–11 and Revelation 8:3–5, how do the prayers of suffering believers on earth participate in God's cosmic execution of justice in history?
4. **Prophetic Imagination:** Nahum uses vivid sensory descriptions (red shields, cracking whips, galloping horses, the ruined lion's den) to depict Nineveh's fall. How does cultivating this "prophetic imagination" help us look past the apparent strength of worldly corruption today?
5. **Personal Application:** In Habakkuk 1, the prophet brings raw, honest questions to God when divine actions seem to contradict human logic. What difficult situations in your community or nation do you need to bring honestly before God in prophetic prayer, choosing to trust His refuge?

Phone Summary (WhatsApp)

The sovereign God who showed relentless mercy to Nineveh under Jonah executed righteous covenant justice under Nahum when they returned to cruelty. True faith does not take personal revenge, but offers bold prayers that move the throne of heaven while resting in God during changing world orders. "The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of distress; He cares for those who trust in Him" (Nahum 1:7, BSB).

Teaching outline

Main Passage: Nahum 1:1–15; Habakkuk 1:1–13
The Big Idea: The sovereign God who shows relentless mercy to the repentant also executes righteous covenant vengeance upon wicked oppressors, calling His faithful remnant to trust His justice and live by prophetic faith during shifting world orders.

Movement 1: The Geopolitical Shift and the Covenant Husband

- **Key Scripture:** Nahum 1:2; Isaiah 37
- **Teaching Point:** The seventh-century BC prophets ministered during massive geopolitical transitions as the brutal Neo-Assyrian Empire began to fall. Nahum reveals that God's terrifying wrath is rooted in marital covenant jealousy: God stands up as a faithful husband defending His oppressed bride against a violent predator.
- **Core Insight:** Divine vengeance is not an emotional loss of control; it is righteous justice that brings comfort and vindication to God's suffering people.
- **Visuals:** Visual 101 (Themes of the Minor Prophets), Visual 103 (Assyrian Exile Map), Visual 104 (City of Nineveh), Visual 105 (Nahum 1:2 Scripture).

Movement 2: The Spiritual Mechanism of Prayer in History

- **Key Scripture:** Nahum 1:7; Revelation 6:9–11; Revelation 8:3–5
- **Teaching Point:** When believers face oppression, they are commanded not to take personal revenge, but to leave vengeance to God. As seen under the fifth and seventh seals in Revelation, the prayers of God's people rise like incense to the heavenly throne room and are answered by fire hurled to the earth.
- **Core Insight:** In real time, the crying prayers of a local congregation move the sovereign hand of God to execute justice and alter human history.
- **Visuals:** Visual 1 (A Refuge in Times of Trouble), Visual 2 (Prayers and Divine Judgment).

Movement 3: A Century Apart: Relentless Mercy and Sure Judgment

- **Key Scripture:** Jonah 4:11; Nahum 3:19
- **Teaching Point:** Jonah (c. 760 BC) and Nahum (c. 660 BC) present two complementary aspects of God's unchanging holy character toward Nineveh. When Nineveh repented, God extended relentless mercy; when Nineveh returned to chronic cruelty a century later, God executed unyielding justice.

- **Core Insight:** God's character is consistent, not whimsical. Jonah ends with a question of grace; Nahum ends with a question of justice.
- **Visuals:** Visual 109 (Jonah and Nahum Compared), Visual 3 (Questions of Grace and Justice).

Movement 4: Poetic Prophecy and the Good News of Overthrow

- **Key Scripture:** Nahum 1:15; 2:2–3; 3:2–3
- **Teaching Point:** Nahum announces the downfall of Nineveh as *euangelion*, the heraldic good news of imperial liberation and lasting peace. Nahum employs vivid visual colors (scarlet warriors, flashing chariots) and acoustic effects (cracking whips, rattling wheels) to cultivate prophetic imagination and guarantee the certainty of God's impending judgment.
- **Core Insight:** Worldly powers that boast like invincible lion dens will be completely reversed by God's sovereign decree.
- **Visuals:** Visual 112 (Seventh-Century Prophets), Visual 113 (Nahum and the Minor Prophets), Visual 4 (The Good News of Peace).

Movement 5: The Prophetic Dialogue of Habakkuk

- **Key Scripture:** Habakkuk 1:1–4, 13; Habakkuk 2:4
- **Teaching Point:** As the Babylonian Empire rose to replace Assyria, Habakkuk engaged in honest prophetic prayer, asking hard questions about internal injustice in Judah and God's perplexing use of wicked Babylon as an instrument of discipline.
- **Core Insight:** Prophetic prayer does not hide human perplexity; it brings honest questions to God and receives sovereign revelation. In the midst of collapsing empires, the righteous shall live by their faith.
- **Visuals:** Visual 119 (Seventh-Century Timeline).

Closing Response

Call the church to renounce personal bitterness, engage in spiritual warfare through intercession for righteous justice, and anchor their faith in the unchanging God who remains a refuge for all who trust in Him.

Scripture quotations: The Holy Bible, Berean Standard Bible (BSB), in the public domain, from eBible.org.