

Nahum - Habakkuk

*This is part of an ongoing series of short articles designed to help us understand what scripture is and what is **in** each book of scripture. Previous articles can be found at www.openarms-communityofchrist.org.*

Many of the prophetic books seem to have been written in response to events and/or concerns that impacted the Israelites. **Nahum** is no exception. The book was probably written between 626-612 BCE; the author is known only by his name.

The Assyrians had ruled the area from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean for centuries. However, they came under attack from the Medes (Persia) and the Chaldeans (Babylon) and lost their dominance with the loss of their ancient capital city in 614 BCE and the city of Nineveh in 612 BCE.

There was delight at the overthrow of Nineveh, expressed clearly in this book. The author is passionately partisan, expressing that the Assyrians' downfall was the Lord's judgment on an unscrupulous, defiant nation. But it failed to acknowledge that Israel needed to look closely at itself and consider the consequences of this divine justice—that the Lord is the avenger of cruelty and immorality.

The book of **Habakkuk** was written probably around 608-598 BCE—at the height of the Babylonian power. We know nothing about the author, nor how the writings in the book were put together.

There are three distinct literary forms:

Chapter 1-2:5 is a dialogue between the prophet and God.

Chapter 2:6-20 is in classical prophetic style, in other words five “woes” against a wicked nation.

Chapter 3 is a lengthy poem identified as a prayer and meant for liturgical use.

These three separate forms may not have been written at the same time and may not have originally been intended to go together. But the prophet united them because they all deal with justifying the ways of God.

There question of why God is silent when wickedness seems to be supreme is an ongoing question. In our own time it's been expressed as “Why do bad things happen to good people?” The answer that Habakkuk gives is this: God is still in charge. In God's own time and way, God will deal with the wicked, but the righteous shall live by their faith.