

Nahum

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, . . . the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Book of Nahum using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to Reading the Prophets*—especially the section on Nahum—will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don’t miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church’s criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God’s unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church’s living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit’s guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you’ll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§]And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶]Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||}that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||}and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.
14 Do all thi tioning,¹⁵that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven . . . earth . . . under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

2:11 confess: I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God’s g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

A Thing to Harpagmos (G in the Greek O Occurrences of “robbery”. Its considerable d the leading vi (1) Some, like “something sel

Prepare

Read the Introduction to Nahum, paying particular attention to the *Historical Background*, the *Message of the Prophet*, and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of Nahum to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of Nahum, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on Nahum as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:2–8.** As a victory hymn to the Lord, the Divine Warrior, in what role is he hailed? Although the Assyrians were “strong and many” at the time of writing, of what was the prophet so certain that he did years in advance? How does Nahum depict the coming judgment? What does this way of speaking recall? Although literarily, the hymn may be a partial acrostic poem, what conflicting evidence does the text as it stands present?
2. **1:3.** What does God’s slowness to anger mean? How is the phrase “and of great might” a striking departure from an OT pattern? In this case, with what is the expected reference to divine mercy replaced? While the mercy of God is limitless in itself, what can put limits on its reception? As part of the Sinai revelation where the Lord made known his patience and mercy to Moses, what was equally affirmed there?
3. **1:7.** As reassurance for all who trust in God and his lordship over the world, what is Nahum’s message? For what does this general truth set the stage and what will it bring?
4. **Word Study: Peace (1:15).** How many times does the Hebrew word *shālôm* appear in the Old Testament? With its rich depth of meaning and a broad range of usage, how is it spoken? In other contexts, with what is it closely connected? What is it to have *shālôm*, and for whom does it apply? When does the benefit of peace come? What do prophecies of the messianic age thus foresee? Who is the bringer of this eschatological peace?

For application

1. **1:3.** What happens within you when you become angry? Does your anger rise quickly and subside slowly, or does it ignite slowly and subside quickly? When you do get angry, what sorts of damage are you capable of causing? Why is the slowness of God’s “anger” measured in years or centuries? How does his might manifest itself then?
2. **1:7.** According to the note for this verse, how is the goodness of God compatible with his punishments? Why does God impose discipline on his children (Prov 3:11–12, Heb 12:5)? How might his discipline of yourself even be considered a way of leading you to take refuge within him?
3. **1:15.** According to the word study on the word *shālôm*, “The Lord has plans for the welfare or peace of the entire People of God”, citing Jer 29:11. According to subsequent verses in that chapter of Jeremiah (i.e., vv. 11–14), how do you discover what those plans are? How have you experienced his plans for your welfare?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:1–10.** Of what are these verses a poetical description? What is Nahum’s message here? According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, how is Satan, too, plundered by Christ and then by the holy apostles?
2. **2:1.** Who is “the shatterer”? What do historical sources indicate about how the city was taken? As a sarcastic use of battle commands, what does the prophet order Assyrian soldiers to do?
3. **2:6.** What were the river gates? How may attackers have used them?
4. **2:11–13.** As the den of Assyria, what will happen to Nineveh? Why will its conquerors triumph? How many different words are used in this passage for lions?

For application

1. **2:3.** Read the note for this verse. Modern armies try to develop weapons that disorient, confuse, or frighten their enemies. What are some examples of such weapons? What are some of the ways Satan can disorient or frighten you? How do you resist his tactics?
2. **2:9.** Jesus said that where your treasure is, there will your heart be (Lk 12:34). What is your treasure? What treasure have you stored up for heaven? How vulnerable is it to attack from either the devil or the world?
3. **2:10.** Imagine yourself in a game, such as soccer, where your team is playing all-out for a title and you realize that crushing defeat is looming. How would you resist the dread of defeat? How would you try to keep the team in the game? In the spiritual life, when failure looms, how do you stir up hope in yourself and encourage it in others?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:7.** With what does the word in Hebrew for “comforters” share the same root? To what contrast does this point?
2. **3:8.** For what city is Thebes the Greek name? Where was it located, and to whom was it dedicated? Why was it thought to be unconquerable, and nonetheless what happened to it? Why does Nahum put this incident forward? Of what were the water canals around Thebes a part?
3. **3:15–17.** What two analogies based on locust infestations does the prophet employ? How many words for “locust” are used in this passage?
4. **3:19.** Why do people clap their hands at the destruction of Nineveh? In biblical times, of what was clapping an expression?

For application

1. **3:4–7.** After the fall of the Nazi empire in 1945, the atrocities of that regime were revealed to the world. How would the nations who were victimized by Germany most likely have regarded it as a nation? How was the effort to create a plan for Germany’s relief and restoration in the best interests of the victorious Allies? Why should a former victim choose to come to the aid of a defeated tormentor?
2. **3:10.** In describing the future destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans, why did Jesus express sorrow for pregnant women and nursing mothers (Mt 24:19)? What is often the fate of women and children at the hands of an invading army? What has the Church in your area done for refugees and other victims of war and violence?
3. **3:12–15.** Since modern cities cannot rely on defensive walls, what defenses do they have against attack? How reliable are they? What defenses do most citizens have in the event of a natural disaster, such as a flood or forest fire? How reliable are they?
4. **3:19.** The words of this verse can apply to the defeat of the devil and of Death and Hades in Rev 20:10–14. What form does gloating over their defeat take among the saints (cf. Rev 19:1–8)? When you experience victory over the devil and his temptations, what form does your celebration take?