

Nahum God's Faithful Judgement

Last week we saw Micah prophesy judgement against Israel by Assyria and Judah by Babylon

I also mentioned that after God used Assyria and Babylon as the rods of his judgement, he would also judge them.

The book of Nahum is all about God's judgement of Assyria and particularly Nineveh, its capital city.

Assyria was one of the first great world powers and we saw in 2 Kings 17 that God used them to chasten Israel, to give them over to their own desires which were to worship other gods. In the process, Assyria destroyed Israel, burned its cities, murdered its citizens and took multitudes into captivity.

Assyrian invaded Israel in 732 BC.

The Babylonians overtook the Assyrians in 612 BC.

The point of Nahum's prophecy is that no one gets away with sin. But it all begins with

First: A Vision of God's Glory 1:1-8

Nahum begins just like Micah and just like Habakkuk finishes; with a glimpse of God's glory

The book opens with God's description of himself in Exodus 34:6-7 after the golden calf incident

1:2 - The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty.

The remainder of the chapter (after verse 8) discusses God's faithfulness to his own people and contrasts his judgement of Assyria

Vs 12-13 - Thus says the LORD, "Though they are at full strength and many, they will be cut down and pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more. ¹³ And now I will break his yoke from off you and will burst your bonds apart."

God will judge evil, even ours. But he will also be a refuge to those who repent and trust in him.

- a) Even though this is an oracle against Nineveh (v 1), Nahum uses Isaiah's language when he prophesied the 'good news' about the downfall of Babylon.

Isaiah 52:7 - *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."*

Nahum 1:15 - *Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace!*

Isaiah prophesied around 750-695 BC. Nahum prophesied around 660-630 BC.

FYI: Isaiah prophesied under Uzziah, Jothan, Ahaz and Hezekiah in 2 Kings 15-20. Nahum prophesied under Manasseh Amon, Josiah in 2 Kings 15-18.

As I mentioned last week, Assyria stands in a long line of empires whom God has created and used for his purposes.

- a) Assyria
- b) Babylon
- c) Medo-Persians
- d) Egypt
- e) Chinese Dynasties
- f) Greeks
- g) Romans
- h) The Catholic Church. Between 312 and 1517, the RCC was the most powerful & influential institution on earth and, since 1984, the U.S. affords it a U.S. Ambassador and embassy. One could make an argument for Islam.
- i) Britain & Spain
- j) The United States & Russia
- k) China

Ezekiel 38:1-4 - *The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him ³ and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. ⁴ And I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great host, all of them with buckler and shield, wielding swords. ⁵ Persia, Cush, and Put are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; ⁶ Gomer and all his hordes; Beth-togarmah from the uttermost parts of the north with all his hordes—many peoples are with you....**10-12** - Thus says the Lord GOD: On that day, thoughts will come into your mind, and you will devise an evil scheme ¹¹ and say, 'I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will fall upon the quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having no bars or gates,' ¹² to seize spoil and carry off plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places that are now inhabited, and the people who were gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell at the center of the earth. - **18-23** - But on that day, the day that Gog shall come against the land of*

Israel, declares the Lord GOD, my wrath will be roused in my anger. ¹⁹ For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare, On that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. ²⁰ The fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field and all creeping things that creep on the ground, and all the people who are on the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence. And the mountains shall be thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground. ²¹ I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Lord GOD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. ²² With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur. ²³ So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

How does God do this? He simply allows the evil in our hearts to run its course. In this way, his judgement is just and deserved.

Once Nahum has described what God has, does and will do to evil empires and people, he describes how it happens to Nineveh

b) To perform sin is an act of rebellion against God and his plans for the world

1:9 & 11 - *What do you plot against the LORD?...*

We know that God is reconciling all things to himself and moving the world toward an eternal shalom. Sin is rebellion against God's redemptive agenda. He takes every sin seriously because it moves you and the world in a direction contrary to his holiness and will.

We must not sin, but we also must not cooperate with those who do.

13 - From you came one who plotted evil against the LORD, a worthless counselor.

Instead of cooperating with those who do evil, we should encourage everyone to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly. One reason is that when the evil suffer, the righteous often do also.

Second: The Destruction of Nineveh. Ch 2

Note: In case you are wondering, Jonah preached God's judgement and God showed mercy to Nineveh about two hundred years earlier in 810-790 in 2 Kings 13-14. In other words, Nineveh has stored up about 200 years' worth of judgement.

- a) God's motive – v 2 - *For the LORD is restoring the majesty of Jacob as the majesty of Israel*
- b) The front line of Babylonian soldiers – 3a - *The shield of his mighty men is red; his soldiers are clothed in scarlet.*

- c) The chariots behind them – 3b-4 - *The chariots come with flashing metal*
- d) The breach of the city walls – 5b - *they hasten to the wall; the siege tower is set up.*
- e) The captivity of the people – 7a - *its mistress is stripped; she is carried off*
- f) The plundering of the city – 9 - *Plunder the silver, plunder the gold! There is no end of the treasure or of the wealth of all precious things.*
- g) God's message – 13 - *Behold, I am against you, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will burn your chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions. I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall no longer be heard.*

One reason Nahum has detailed the slow but sure incursion of Babylon into Assyria is that he wants us to see the slow but sure incursion of sin into our lives. Sin assails us just like a foreign army laying siege to a city and then progressively overtaking it.

What is Nahum's point. And what is important for us to know? Nineveh's downfall is presented as an example of how

- 1 – God is at work throughout history setting up and taking down kingdoms
- 2 – God is the only Just King who rightly and must assuredly judges nations and people
- 3 – No kingdom, empire, state or person gets away with sin.

Third: Nahum's Warning. Ch 3

V 1 - Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder—no end to the prey!

Assyria's violence has sown the seeds of their own destruction.

Just like Micah envisioned all of Israel as one man, broken and repenting before God, so Nahum pictures Nineveh in the person of its king who is broken and defeated. No one mourns him. Instead, people are glad he is defeated.

18-19 - Your shepherds are asleep, O king of Assyria; your nobles slumber. Your people are scattered on the mountains with none to gather them. ¹⁹ There is no easing your hurt; your wound is grievous. All who hear the news about you clap their hands over you. For upon whom has not come your unceasing evil?

The evil person has no real friends, and everyone is happy when the evil person is overthrown.

Conclusion:

Nahum highlights Nineveh as an example of an oppressive nation. History is filled with men, women and nations who have subjugated others, who have caused their citizens and their enemies to suffer under their hands.

Nahum reminds us that God is grieved by the injustice of wrongdoers and the suffering of the oppressed. His divine character moves him, it requires him to right all the wrongs of this world.

Again, while this is bad news for evil doers, it is good news for the oppressed.

This takes us back to the very beginning of the book where God promises mercy to those who love him

1:7 - The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him.

Nahum reminds us that God is good, that he is just and that he will judge every wrongdoer. He also invites us to love the Lord and find shelter in him.

Our Application:

God's pronouncement of judgement on sinful nations and people is 'good news' to God's people.

1 – Tennessee voters cast ballots this past week. We have a presidential election approaching.

- a) We can know that the outcome is in God's hands.
- b) Sometimes God elevates evil people to use them as his disciplining arm
- c) But God is always faithful to judge evil and to preserve his people
- d) We can act justly, love mercy and walk humbly because we know God avenges wrong
- e) We should quickly repent of sin
- f) We are also concerned about fake news; people getting away with sin.
- g) But God judges all sin and judges it rightly.

Community Groups:

1 – How was life for you this week?

2 – What are your specific pressure points?

- 3 – How are you ministering to those around you?
- 4 – What particular disciplines are spiritually forming you?
- 5 – What do you like best about reading the Bible chronologically?
- 6 – What has been your favorite reading and why?
- 7 – What is the book of Nahum about?
- 9 – Why does the book begin with a vision of God?
- 9 – What does Nineveh symbolize?
- 10 – Why is it ‘good news’ that God judges evil?
- 11 – How might God’s judgement of evil be ‘bad news’ for us?
- 12 – What is Nahum’s point in revealing Nineveh’s judgement to his readers?
- 13 – Why does Nahum show us the slow, sure Babylonian encroachment into Nineveh?
- 14 – How does the knowledge of God’s judgement of sin, encourage believers?
- 15 – What applications can you draw from the book of Nahum?
- 16 – Spend time praying for each other