

III. “A Stronghold in the Day of Trouble”

16-Mar-03 Nahum 1:1-14

Theme: God provides deliverance for His people through destroying the wicked.

Key Verse: Nahum 1:7 “The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.”

Review

Last week, we did an **introduction to the three 7th Century Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah**. The books can be summarized very briefly as follows: 1) Nahum – “Die, Nineveh, die!” 2) Habakkuk – “The just shall live by his faith;” and 3) Zephaniah – “The Day of the LORD is near.” All three books emphasize that God’s justice leads to judgment on the wicked and salvation of the righteous. Little is known about any of the prophets, thus emphasizing that God uses otherwise unknown men as His “voice,” to announce His judgments against the great nations of the world. Mightier than human armies is the prophetic word of God.

Nahum was the first of the three books to be written, most likely around 645 BC, towards the end of the long reign of Manasseh. His single theme is the impending doom of Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrian empire.

Habakkuk was the last of the three books to be written, most likely between 608 and 605 BC, during the reign of Jehoiakim. His complaint about injustice in Judah leads to God’s revelation that He is raising up the Babylonians to chastise His people. God further goes on to declare that Babylon will also be punished in turn, while the “righteous will live by his faith.” Habakkuk responds to God’s words in a hymn of praise.

Zephaniah was written during the reign of Josiah, the last good king of Judah, around 622 BC. His prophecy is steeped in the language of Deuteronomy and likely added weight to Josiah’s reforms. Zephaniah declares the great Day of the LORD is near. The Day of Yahweh is a terrifying day of judgment and destruction on the wicked, while at the same time is a day of overwhelming love toward His people. The Day of the Lord is a day of judgment and blessing, a day of wrath and hope, a day both near and still yet to come.

Introduction

Today, we will begin our in-depth study of these prophets by looking at chapter 1 of Nahum. Note that verse 15 of chapter 1 is considered verse 1 of chapter 2 in the Hebrew Bible. For the purposes of this class, we will follow that arrangement, and only cover verses 1-14 of Nahum 1 today. As we go through these prophets, we will be referring to **the translation and arrangement of the text by Dr. O. Palmer Robertson**. As I’ve studied these prophets, I’ve found that Dr. Robertson’s translation and arrangement help me to see the parallelism of the Hebrew poetry and highlight the main thoughts and ideas of the prophecy. I hope that it will also help you. Please feel free to ask questions and make comments. **I want this Bible study to be interactive, rather than lecture-based.**

Superscription (1:1)

*1 The burden of Ninevah.
The book of the vision
Of Nahum the Elkoshite.*

Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

1. Nahum is unique among the fifteen canonical prophetic books in that the entirety of his *book* is characterized as a *vision* revealed by God. He is the only prophet to describe his oracle (or, rather, collection of oracles) as a book. This means that it was **not necessarily the result of verbal preaching**; perhaps what we have in our Bibles is something which was originally written as a pamphlet for circulation and discussion among the people.

Apart from the prophecy of Obadiah, Nahum is the only prophetic book which makes no mention of the sins of God's people; it is entirely taken up with the impending destruction of one of the most powerful of the Assyrian cities. **The subject of the oracle is Nineveh, and by extension Assyria**, of which it was the capital from the time of Sennacherib (early eighth century BC) until the city's destruction by the Babylonians in 612 BC. Although the literal city is meant here, it could also have **symbolic overtones**, representing all those who opposed God and His work, as did the Babylonian capital city Babylon at a later period (cf. Rev. 18:2, 10, 21). At the time in which Nahum prophesied, Assyria was the one great power whose terrible influence was felt throughout the whole region. Everyone was terrified of the Assyrians and their city of Nineveh was, to the Judeans, a symbol of extreme evil.

It is rather startling to note that one entire book of the Bible is devoted to the destruction of a single heathen city. It is true that the total thrust of Jonah also concerns itself with God's judgment on this same city of Nineveh. But the difference of approach between Nahum and Johan only accentuates the remarkable character of the prophecy of Nahum. While the reluctant Jonah is literally driven by God to announce a message that leads to a wondrous manifestation of mercy to the wicked city, Nahum paints exclusively with the dark tones of judgment's inevitability. **Each of Nahum's three chapters only advances this single theme of the certainty, the inevitability, of the awesome judgment of God.**

The strength of the Assyrian empire indicates a date prior to the death of Ashurbanipal (668-627 BC). Nahum most likely prophesied in the latter days of Manasseh (about 645 BC). If so, his public proclamation of the utter devastation of Nineveh could **not have been a very popular message. It was hardly the political thing to say**, even in the days of Manasseh's reform. The northern territory of Israel was governed by Assyrian overlords, and the southern kingdom of Judah maintained an alliance with Assyria as a consequence of Manasseh's policy of syncretism.

Nahum means "comforter," "comfort," "consolation," or "reassurance," but little else is known about him. The term *Elkoshite* most probably refers to the place of Nahum's origin. Jerome in the 4th century AD identifies Elkosh as a little village in Galilee pointed out to him by a guide. It could be objected that the northern kingdom which would have included this "little village in Galilee" had been taken into captivity long before Nahum's day. Yet Scripture makes it plain that God continued to maintain His people in the territory of the northern kingdom (cf. 2 Kgs 23:15-20). A later tradition in the area links Nahum with the "village of Nahum," Capernaum. Furthermore, the prophet's allusion to the devastation specifically of Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon supports a location for the prophet's origin in northern Palestine (see Nah. 1:4). Although it cannot be affirmed with certainty, there is something fitting about the thought that **Nahum, the prophet of Assyria's doom, had his origins in the northern kingdom**. A prophet representing the surviving remnant of the north would be called specifically to announce the inevitability of God's acts of retributive justice.

Exposition

I. Public Announcement of Nineveh's Judgment (1:2-14)

This opening hymn gives the theological context of the book as showing God's universal power and justice through the example of the nation Assyria. We will look at three different topics: 1) God as Judge; 2) God's judgment on Nineveh; and 3) the surety of God's judgment.

A. The Awesome Terror of God's Judgment (1:2-6)

1. His Person as Judge (1:2-3)

- 2 a A God of jealousy
 - b and one who takes vengeance is Yahweh;
 - b one who takes vengeance is Yahweh
 - a and a master of wrath.

- a One who takes vengeance is Yahweh
 - b toward His adversaries;
 - a and He reserves wrath
 - b for His enemies.
- 3 a Yahweh—
 - b longsuffering in anger
 - b and great in strength
 - b and by no means will He clear the guilty.

Yahweh—

- a in whirlwind and in storm
- b (is) His way,
- a and clouds
- b (are) the dust of His feet.

2. The impact of Nahum's poetic structure is felt immediately as the prophet opens with a picture of **God's person as judge**. Generally *jealousy* conveys a negative image. But God's jealousy must be seen in a different light. **God's jealousy is a covenant term**, indicating that when a relationship between God and His people was entered into, it was to be exclusive of all other parties on both sides (Ex. 6:7; cf. Ho. 1:9; 2:23). God is "jealous" or "zealous" that His own honor be maintained. **The Lord means that He will put up with no rivalry**. God has an exclusive claim upon each of His children. He demands that they refrain from sin and anything else which might bring His honor into disrepute. A departure from wholehearted submission to God can only bring chaos into the world. Only whole-souled worship of the one true living God can assure a harmonious balance in the world so that all aspects of creation receive their proper due. God's "jealousy" clearly has the best interest of His creation in view. The very essence of God is associated with His "jealousy" (cp. Ex. 20:5; 34:14; cp. also Rom. 11:13-14). **God's jealousy consumes, but it also redeems**. Because He is jealous, He cares enough to redeem human beings out of their recalcitrant state. Because idolatry, covetousness, and brutality insult His honor, **God shall destroy the wicked—and also shall save His rebellious people**.

This twofold outworking of the jealousy of God in consuming the sinner in wrath and in propitiating for the sinner in mercy provides the ultimate **explanation as to why the ministry of**

Jonah to Nineveh had a radically different consequence from the ministry of Nahum to the same city. In the one case, God manifested His propitiatory grace; in the other He manifested His consuming wrath. Although eighth-century Nineveh repented and was saved, the same city found it impossible to repent one hundred years later.

If “jealousy” or “zealousness” characterizes God’s attitude toward all rivals, then *vengeance* describes the action that emerges from that jealousy. Three times Nahum mentions this word vengeance in the second verse of the opening chapter of his prophecy. **Vengeance is retaliatory punishment for wrong which has been done.** Not only does the Almighty, all-knowing, all-just God return to the sinner an appropriate repayment for every evil that he has done; He also renders this repayment in a context of righteous indignation, disgust, and wrath. God’s jealousy is structurally paralleled to **His wrath, the angry reaction of a holy God to sin**, whether of pagans or of Israel itself (Rom. 1:18). **“Zeal” for the Lord is reflected appropriately in the creature, but “vengeance” is an action reserved essentially for God Himself** (Dt. 32:35; Ps. 94:1). Only God may judge with righteousness and punish appropriately. A delay in God’s justice must not be misunderstood even for a moment as indicating an indulgent leniency on the part of the Almighty. God displays a calculated control in His dispensing of vengeance, yet the day of the Lord’s vengeance indeed will come. Our God is not only a God of love; He is also a God of justice. He cannot countenance sin in any shape or form.

3. Nahum refers back to Exodus 34:6-7 in describing Yahweh as *longsuffering in anger* and one who *by no means will clear the guilty*. But in the case of Nahum’s appeal to this text in Exodus, crucial omissions of particular phrases tell the tale. God is *longsuffering in anger*, which would explain the long delay in His bringing judgment on Nineveh. God is not quick to lose His temper. Indeed, unlike us, He never does lose control of Himself. But Nahum mentions nothing of the fact that this same God is “merciful and gracious...” For **Nahum wishes to stress the reality of judgment that must arise out of the nature of God.** The Lord may be forgiving and merciful. But the point of no return has been passed by Nineveh, and the only thing left is waiting for the judgment that is sure to come.

Between his quotation of phrases from Exodus 34, Nahum introduces a new thought. Yahweh is *great in strength*, a concept which certainly places the emphasis on something other than the Lord’s readiness to forgive. It is this power that now shall be concentrated on the destruction of the national capital of the mighty empire of Assyria.

For God *by no means will clear the guilty*. The city of Nineveh had responded to a call to repent some 150 years before Nahum wrote. This was when Jonah preached to them. However, by the time of Nahum they had obviously fallen back into their old ways again. So long as a person, city or nation continues to bear the burden of its own guilt, it cannot be declared free and clear of liability to punishment. But if guilt is transferred to another party by way of substitution in accordance with the provisions of the covenant, then the Lord may manifest His forgiveness. The problem with Nineveh was that through their separation from the grace of the covenant, they bore their own guilt.

Nahum proceeds to present God in motion, God in action. The imagery of *whirlwind, storm, and cloud* depict the activity of God in a realm between heaven and earth.

Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

2. His Action as Judge (1:4-5)

- 4 *a* He rebukes the sea
 b and dries it up,
 a and all the rivers
 b He makes arid.
- a* Bashan and Carmel
 b are languishing,
 a and the fruit of Lebanon
 b is languishing.
- 5 *a* Mountains
 b quake at Him,
 a and hills
 b melt.
- a* The earth heaves
 b before Him,
 a the world
 b and all its inhabitants.

God's judgment is universal. He created everything, and everything is under His control. God interacts powerfully with the world He has made, so that the attributes that Nahum has so vividly delineated have their telling effect on every element of creation. **His power is shown by His ability to reverse creation.** The sea, the rivers, the fruitful lands, mountains, hills, the earth, the world, and all its inhabitants—these diverse segments feel the effect of God's jealousy, vengeance, wrath, anger, might, and justice.

4. Nahum recollects the great rebuke of the sea at the Exodus. **He refers to the drying up of the Red Sea and the Israelites' crossing of the Jordan** when they entered the Promised Land. Since the ancient city of Nineveh depended on its natural water-barrier as a basic element of defense, these words vivify the city's hopeless state. As a matter of fact, the streams about Nineveh ultimately became the way of their destruction.

Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon are the most fertile, forest-clad, and well-watered areas of Palestine. Bashan stretches across the Transjordan area from Mt. Hermon in the north to the brook Jabbok in the south, including all the territory of Gilead. The whole realm became a type of fertility (Ez. 39:18; Amos 4:1; Mic. 7:14). To the western extremity of northern Israel was Carmel, a fertile mountain jutting into the Mediterranean (cf. Is. 33:9; 35:2; Jer. 50:19). The most prominent *fruit of Lebanon* would have to be its world-famous cedars. If the Lord would bring such scathing judgment on the naturally blessed areas of His own land, what reason does Nineveh have to expect that it would somehow be spared a similar devastation from the Lord?

5. The terrors of the Lord in judgment cannot be restricted to one single area of the world. The very foundations of the world are disturbed by His wrath.

3. Your Stance Before Him as Judge (1:6)

- 6 a Before His indignation
b who shall stand?
b And who shall arise
a before the fierceness of His anger?
- a His fury
b is poured out
c like fire;
c and the boulders
b are broken
a before Him.

6. A rhetorical question demanding response now draws the listener directly into the pathway of the prophetic proclamation. Who shall stand? Who shall rise up? Israel? Judah? Assyria? Babylon? No. None of them. Each nation in its turn shall undergo the devastating judgments of the Lord. None is strong enough to resist the working of His power as the rising and falling tides of history display His wrath. So **what is your stance before the wrath of the Almighty?** How do you respond to the prophet's rhetorical query? Shall you or your nation stand? **The questions of Nahum demand appropriate self-examination.** It is all very well for us to say that blatantly wicked people deserve to be punished by God, but what about us? Are we wholly devoted to the service of God? Are our hands always clean? When we read this prophecy we can see that Nahum is urging us all to give careful thought to our ways (cp. Hag. 1:5, 7) and **make sure that we are right with God.**

B. The Specific Target of God's Judgment (1:7-11)

Having introduced the subject of God as judge, the prophet now moves to an identification of the specific target of divine judgment, which is the city of Nineveh. In zeroing in on this specific city as the point of God's wrath, the prophet **sets the fierceness of divine wrath over against the tenderness with which He treats His own people.**

1. Judgment in a Context of God's Care for His Own (1:7)

- 7 Good is Yahweh,
a refuge in the day of adversity.
And He knows those who seek shelter in Him.

7. The message of Nahum up to this point appears purely in negative terms. But now it becomes apparent that those who turn to the Lord have nothing to fear. In juxtaposition with God's power in wrath, one is again confronted with His patience and grace (cp. v. 2) Yahweh's benevolent character is shown toward those seeking Him. **God is not only a God of judgment; He is also a God of mercy.** He is *good*, and His people shall enjoy an abundant salvation. It is for this reason that we can have hope. Actually **the judgment on Nineveh must be viewed from the perspective of God's intent to show mercy to His people.** He responds to their cry for relief from oppression by sending judgment on their enemies. The Lord is good—but only *to those who seek shelter in Him.* **The repentant sinner seeks for help in none other than Him.** According to the prophet, God *knows* those who seek shelter in Him. This "knowing" of the Lord must be understood in the full biblical sense of "loving" with the most intense care. The

Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

Lord *knows those who seek shelter in Him*, meaning that He loves them, cares for them, cherishes their well-being. “Goodness” in God is most frequently associated with covenant fidelity (*hesed*; cf. 2 Chr. 5:13; 7:3; Ezra 3:11; Ps. 106:1; 136:1; etc.).

2. Judgment Directed Specifically against Seventh-Century B.C. Assyria (1:8-11)

- 8 *But with a cataclysmic flood
He will make a complete end
of her place;
and His enemies
He will pursue into the darkness.*
- 9 *What do you think about Yahweh?
He will make a complete end;
Adversity shall not arise a second time.*
- 10 *For as thorns twisted
and as with drink they are drunk;
so they shall be consumed
as stubble fully dried.*
- 11 *From you
he came forth,
he who devises
evil against Yahweh
he who schemes
ruthlessly.*

Verse 8 says the Lord will make a complete end of *her* place, referring directly to the city of Nineveh. Verse 9 asks what *you* (masculine plural) think about Yahweh, apparently eliciting a faith-response from the people of Judah. Verse 10 announces that *they* shall be totally consumed, referring to the judgment which must fall on the inhabitants of Nineveh. Verse 11 returns to a feminine singular pronoun as in v. 8, indicating that from the city of Nineveh (feminine singular) had come forth one who had devised evil against the Lord.

8. In an earlier day, the prophet Isaiah had used the imagery of a *cataclysmic flood* to describe the assault of Assyria against Israel (Is. 8:7-8). But now Assyria shall be the one to experience submersion under a flood tide of invaders. Some years after this prophecy was given there was breach in part of Nineveh’s great city wall. **History tells us that it was caused by a tremendous flood (just as Nahum had prophesied in 1:8);** and Israel was comforted by the knowledge that Nineveh was going to be destroyed. *Make a complete end of her place* suggests not only that the city itself would be destroyed, but that its site would become uninhabited and unoccupied. Shortly after Nahum’s prophecy, this extent of devastation became Nineveh’s literal experience. A scant three hundred years after the fall of the colossal city of Nineveh, travelers hardly suspected that the area ever had been inhabited. Just as the site of the city shall disappear, so its inhabitants will vanish into an oblivious, oppressive blackness. *Darkness* in Scripture symbolizes distress, terror, mourning, perplexity, and dread.

9. *What do you [masculine plural] think about Yahweh?* **The verb employed could mean either “think” or “devise.”** If the *you* refers to the inhabitants of Israel, then the force of the question is, “What do you Israelites think about Yahweh? Will he rise up against your

Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

enemies?” But if the *you* refers to the inhabitants of Nineveh, then the force of the question would be, “What do you Ninevites (vainly) devise against Yahweh? Do you really think you can resist His power?” While the preposition in v. 9 may mean “against,” its more predominant meaning is “about, concerning.” Contrariwise, while the preposition of v. 11, may mean “about, concerning,” it is frequently used in a hostile sense. When the statement of v. 11 is compared to the question of v. 9, the differences tilt the decision in the direction of **identifying the *you* of v. 9 with the inhabitants of Israel**. As a consequence, **the rhetorical question of v. 9 intends to stir up the faith of a downtrodden Israelite populace**.

To reinforce the finality of the deliverance promised by the prophetic word of the Lord, Nahum adds: *Adversity shall not arise a second time*. Once this deliverance has been accomplished, the Assyrian shall be finished. A great message of hope indeed! But of course, there are the Babylonians. The Assyrians may be wiped from the face of the earth, but demons seven times worse emerge in the form of the Babylonian oppressors. This kind of problem in **understanding prophetic promises necessitates an ultimate deliverance** that shall break the bonds of the OT teaching models. This realization comes only on the occasion of the **replacing of the old covenant forms with the new covenant realities**.

10. The judgment of God shall come in a manner appropriate to the stubbornness of the sinner, stubborn *as thorns twisted*. This stubbornness is counted by the consuming fire of God’s wrath: *they shall be consumed as stubble fully dried*. This is the picture: these wicked people would be so tangled up with thorns, and so drunk with wine, that God would pick up the whole bundle of thorns (Ninevites as well) and cast them into the fire.

11. This stubborn rebellion against the will of God on the part of Ninevah has produced a leader, a prince who has turned passive resistance into active opposition. The womb of wickedness, which is Nineveh has produced a horrid monstrosity, **a son of “Belial,”** as the text reads literally (here translated *he who schemes ruthlessly*). The term “Belial” is used elsewhere in Scripture (Dt. 13:13, Jdg. 19:22; 20:13; Ps. 41:8-9; 2 Cor. 6:15). Nahum alone of the prophets uses the term “Belial,” and he employs it twice (1:11; 1:15). **This “counselor of Belial” is evidently the king, the leader of this wicked people**. Nahum could be referring to a specific king, such as Sennacherib, but the phrase is best understood as having a more general application. Not only Sennacherib, but all those wicked kings and leaders of the enemies of God’s people who have come forth from Assyria manifest the characteristics of that brutal figure described by Nahum.

The term “Belial” at first had a broad application to designate men generally possessing a set of scoundrel-like characteristics. Subsequently the term narrowed so that it **became a designation of Satan himself**, the archenemy of God. As the middle of a fivefold contrast Paul in **2 Cor. 6:15** sets “Christ” and “Belial” over against one another. Christ and Belial represent rulers of two diametrically opposed kingdoms. Paul’s contrast represents the climax of the conflict represented in Nahum. An ominous figure stands behind the ruler from Nineveh, prodding him on in his wicked determinations. But one stands against him, the divine counterpart to his position of power. It is “the Christ,” the anointed king who rules for the Lord throughout the ages. These two persons and the kingdoms they represent remain in conflict with one another until their struggle is finally resolved. **So the judgment directed specifically against seventh-century Assyria represents a critical moment in the divine program for persevering in the redemption of His people**.

C. The Imminent Character of God's Judgment (1:12-14)

In the form of an oracle (v. 12 *Thus says Yahweh*) to two parties in a legal dispute, God pronounces His verdicts alternately to Judah, for her acquittal and hope (vv. 12-13; 15; 2:2), and to Assyria, for her destruction (v. 14; 2:1).

1. Judgment Now Despite Assyrian Strength (1: 12a)

12a *Thus says Yahweh:
Though they be complete
and also numerous,
yet they shall be mowed down
and He shall pass over.*

12a. Nahum wishes to **underscore the certainty of Nineveh's fall, all appearances to the contrary.** Imminence is underscored by the fact that judgment shall come even though the Assyrians *be complete and also numerous*. Nineveh was known to be a great city "of three days journey" (Jon. 3:3). Yet this numerous populace would be *mowed down* like so many blades of grass. The abrupt switch from "*they shall be mowed down*" to "*He shall pass over*" causes difficulty, unless we understand that God is *He*, the one who shall *pass over*. **In the very way in which He "passed over" in the land of Egypt, so now again He through His agent the death angel shall smite Assyria.**

2. Judgment Now as Relief from Judah's Suffering (1:12b-13)

12b *Though I have afflicted you,
I will never afflict you again.*
13 *And now*
a *I will break*
b *his yoke from upon you*
b *and your bonds*
a *I will burst.*

12b. God is never insensitive to the sufferings of His people, although they may think that He has forgotten them. The categorical statement of Nahum that God *will never afflict you again* finds a challenge in the facts of history. For **although Assyria was set aside once and for all, Babylon and its persecution of Judah soon followed.** Possibly **the prophet views Nineveh as a typical representation of Israel's archenemy, and her destruction as symbolic of God's final act of judgment.** Whoever might prove to be the archenemy of God's people in the future generations could be sure from Nineveh's experience that God would destroy them and deliver His people. God remains vitally concerned for His people in all their afflictions.

13. *And now* **reinforces the imminence of God's judgment** on Nineveh. *I will break his yoke* and the *your bonds I will burst* suggest relief from foreign domination.

3. Judgment Now as the Lord Has Decreed (1:14)

14 *Yahweh has given command concerning you:
None shall be sown
bearing your name again.*

Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

*From the house of your gods
I shall cut off graven and molten image;
I shall dig your grave;
for you have no significance.*

14. God has *given command*. **Once that decree has gone forth, it cannot be recalled.** Assyria may appear impregnable. But the publication of the divine decree seals their fate. The masculine singular object (*you*) of this threefold judgment would appear to refer to the king of Assyria himself, probably Ashurbanipal (669-627 BC). The decree of God declares that no one will survive to maintain his name. *None shall be sown*, apparently indicating that his descendants would perish. Furthermore, the *graven and molten image* of the gods of Assyria shall be *cut off*. As a final blow to the royal ego, God declares to the king of Assyria, *I shall dig your grave*. Why shall these repeated blows fall against the king of Assyria? This Scripture declares that the king of Assyria has *no significance*, that he is worthless, that he is “vile.” **The word “vile” or *no significance* means “lightweight,” or “insubstantial.” It is the word “Tekel,” which was used in Daniel 5:27.** There it meant, “You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.” **It is still true today; destruction will ultimately come to all who put their trust in any defense other than the Lord Almighty.**

Conclusion

So now the prophet Nahum has laid his life on the line. From two perspectives he has opened himself up to the threat of death. The powers that be would not be pleased with his message of the devastation of Assyria and its kings. A monarch is not generally happy over a subordinate who declares the curse of death on him. In addition, Nahum has exposed himself to the possibility of death at the hands of his own people by venturing this bold prophecy. Even though spoken by the trembling lips of a mortal man, these words shake the sure foundations of empires.

Since God remains the same, the words of Nahum continue to have significance for all individuals, powers, and nations that oppress God’s people and live in wickedness. God will by no means clear the guilty (Nah. 1:3). **Through destroying the wicked, He will provide deliverance for His people.**

So, Nahum 1 introduces us once again to that grand theme of Scripture – **God’s activity in redemptive history**. Nahum teaches us much about **the nature of God**. On the one hand, we can see His jealousy, vengeance, wrath, and justice (1:2-6); on the other hand, we see His longsuffering (1:3), goodness, and shelter (1:7). God’s judgment vs. God’s mercy. The city of Nineveh saw both sides of God’s justice. In the 8th Century, they experienced God’s mercy, through the ministry of the reluctant prophet Jonah. Nineveh repented, and the city was spared. Unfortunately, that repentance was not inherited by subsequent generation. One hundred years later, Nahum condemns Nineveh for her wickedness, and this time there is no hope of forgiveness. God’s judgment is sure.

Even as we contemplate the surety of His judgment, there is **hope in the message of Nahum 1**. First, God is longsuffering. He has given Nineveh time to repent. Nineveh had heard the gospel in the days of Jonah and repented. However, God will not wait forever. Nineveh was guilty before God, and now her iniquity was full. Like Sodom and Gomorrah, like the Canaanites in Joshua’s day – the time of God’s forbearance for sinners is limited. The Day of the Lord is coming. And that gives us hope, because we can be assured that even as God comes in judgment

Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

of the wicked, He will surely come to save the righteous. **Nahum 1:7** says that “the Lord is good; a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.” This is a message of comfort and hope.

We all believe in God, but **do we trust in Him? That is the question.** He will only be a refuge to those who commit the whole of their lives to His care. “The Lord is good” and He is “a refuge in time of trouble.” “He cares for those who trust in Him” and He utterly destroys all of our enemies and He grants us His peace.

We may feel that life is one great battle. We may wonder how much longer we can last out against all the pressures of life. But the Lord Himself tells us that although our enemies may seem to be very numerous and powerful, despite the fact that they appear to have persuaded many others to side with them against us, yet they will soon be cut off and pass away.

Here in Nahum the Lord promised Judah that their punishment would come to an end (1:12). It was God Himself who had caused His people to suffer for their sin of disobedience to Himself and His law. But He told them that the agony would not go on forever. There would be a time in the future when they would have to suffer no longer. This happened when He sent His own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for them. **Through Christ’s death, everyone who trusts in Him will discover that He is a refuge for them (1:7).** To those who are true believers the Lord said, “I will afflict you no more,” because all of their sins have been taken away by the death of Jesus on the cross.

Next week: Lesson 4 – Nahum 2 – “Behold, on the Mountains . . .”

Close in Prayer.