

For My Name's Sake

The Book of Nahum

Sermon Outline

- I. The book of Nahum.
 - A. An “oracle”—a message from God.
 - B. What do we know about Nahum the man?
 1. Only that he was called by God to prophesy about Nineveh.
 - a. Elkoshite—nothing is known about this community.
 - b. Possibly from Capernaum— *Kfar Nahum* means “village of comfort”...
- Nahum = “comforter”
 - C. Nahum is the “sequel” to Jonah.
 1. What happened to Nineveh over the one hundred years after they repented?
 - a. Affluence, prosperity and success can elevate pride.
 - b. A failure to raise the next generation in the truth of God.
 2. Nahum is a warning to all nations in all generation (Isaiah 14:24-27).
 - D. Nahum is about the coming wrath to Nineveh.
 - E. Nahum is written for the comfort and confidence of Israel, the people of God.
- II. Chapter 1
 - A. A poem (verses 2-15)
 1. Written as an acrostic-- Each section of the poem begins with a successive of the Hebrew Alphabet: *Aleph, Beth, Gimel, He, Vav, Zayin, Heth, Teth, Yodh, Kaph.*
 - B. The poem is all about God and His attributes.
 1. God is Jealous and avenging-- “*The thought is that of a feeling of injured justice and a strong desire to see the right accomplished*”—C. Feinberg
 - a. The source of jealousy is God’s great love for His people.
 2. God is omnipotent—all powerful (1:4-6).
 3. God is good (1:7).
 - a. A purely good God cannot withstand sinfulness.

b. God is “awesome”—Inspiring awe; profoundly reverential

III. Chapter 2: God’s wrath poured out on Nineveh.

- A. (2:1) “You (Nineveh) will be scattered”.
- B. (2:2) Israel (Jacob) will be restored completely.
- C. (2:3-6) The conquering armies of Babylon and the Medes will destroy the Assyrians.
- D. Nineveh is destroyed: what was destroyed?
 - 1. Nineveh was designed to be invincible to invading armies.
 - 2. Walls were 100 feet high, wide enough at the top for four chariots to go abreast.
 - 3. The circumference of its walls were 80+ miles... almost from here to Couer D Alene.
 - 4. There were 1200 defense towers dispersed along the walls.
 - 5. There was a moat 140 feet wide and 60 feet deep around the entire circumference of the walls.

IV Chapter 3: Woe to Nineveh.

- A. Why did God destroy Nineveh?
 - 1. (3:1) “Full of deception and pillage...”
 - 2. (3:4) “...because of the many harlotries of the harlot.”

V. The essence of God’s wrath.

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The Book of Nahum

Sermon Notes

If you haven't begun your search yet.... Begin the adventure of finding Nahum in your Bible... it is near the end of the Old testament.... In between Micah and Habakkuk... does that help?

I have been challenged this week by a statement from one of my respected mentors from long ago regarding preaching.... Spoken about forty years ago... he said:

“ A book that is short on purpose should be preached briefly on purpose... to make something that is a sudden thrust of a dagger lengthy is to take away the punch of it... it is a book to stab us awake like a sharp jab in the abdomen...”

The book of Nahum... the seventh of the minor prophets is short... it is only three chapters long with a total of some 47 verses...you've heard them in their entirety this morning... and if you listened you must have felt the jab... for Nahum is a piercing dagger in its message.

But so you won't get your hopes up... I just can't do it... preach short this morning!...sorry!

A. W. Tozer famously said:

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us

That is such a true statement... and something we need to hang on this morning... [expound].... If you see God as some distant uninvolved deity... perhaps created the universe but then left it to its own... you will never pursue a personal relationship with that God...

But if you see God as the all loving all holy all powerful yet all personal caring God... how you think of God will be the most important thing about you.... Yet...

Interesting but C. S Lewis appears to take issue with Tozer... listen to what he said: *I read in a periodical the other day that the fundamental thing is how we think of God.*

By God Himself, it is not! How God thinks of us is not only more important, but infinitely more important. Indeed, how we think of Him is of no importance except in so far as it is related to how He thinks of us. (which by the way is key to this apparent contradiction!)... what we think of God determines much of what God thinks of Him.....

These words wrestled with my mind this week... we'll come back to these words at the end of this mornings "brief" sermon....but for now... think of those words as an introduction to the message in this short book of Nahum... as was the case then as it is no less now... as it has been

throughout history... It all comes down to what C.S. Lewis said.... *How God thinks of us is the most important thing in all of life...*

As we will see in Nahum... the bottom line is not how powerful and mighty a people are... it doesn't matter how successful... and "great" a nation appears to be... if God sees them as evil sinners....if God sees them as a people who has rejected Him... the outcome is not going to be so good for these people!

Nahum has a message for us this morning... and I don't want us to miss it... our message comes through a prophesy that is addressed to God's people about another people...our Bibles tell us in verse 1 of chapter 1 that this is an "**oracle concerning Nineveh**".

An oracle can be a person... a place... An oracle as it is used here is simply *a message from God*... the way the message came about was by God speaking through a vision to a man named Nahum.... The way the Hebrews pronounced the name is "Nay-Hume"...

What do we know about Nahum?... if you've been with us through this series of the minor prophets... you might expect me to say "nothing!"... we know nothing of the prophet Nahum... and you'd be right...

Like Amos, Joel, Micah... Obadiah... and others... whom little was known... Nahum perhaps is the least known... everything we know about him comes from verse 1... **The oracle of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.**

Well we know he was an Elkoshite you say... we do but what's an Elkoshite?... nobody knows!... there's a bunch of guesses out there... perhaps the best guess is there was a small community near or in the town of Capernaum...

We know Capernaum from our New Testament... a city on the Sea of Galilee...hometown of apostles Simon Peter, James, John, Andrew... Jesus taught in the temple at Capernaum... it is thought that the Elkoshite... specifically Nahum MAY HAVE come from Capernaum because the name Capernaum comes from two words... Kfar = town and Nahum = Comfort

Kfar Nahum means "*village of comfort*"... Nahum's name means "*comforter*"...while most of Nahum's words are *not* very comforting...but that depends on who's listening...out of the 1284 words that make up the book... over 1000 of them speak of God's wrath.... but his message is *comforting* to God's people...because this time... God's wrath is not directed to them... but on a people we've already met a couple of weeks ago... the Ninevites.

Nahum is really the sequel to the book of Jonah... we looked at Jonah a couple of weeks ago...bringing us further than just a fish story...I won't go back into the details but to understand Nahum we need to remember a few things...

God appointed Jonah to take a message to Nineveh... Nineveh was the capital city of the Assyrian empire which rose to prominence in the 6th and 7th centuries BC... Nineveh was located in what today is Iraq... near the city of modern day Mosul... a long way from Israel.

Remember that the Assyrians were a very barbaric...ruthless people.... they were the enemies of just about all other nations including the divided kingdom of Israel and Judah...they were a godless...idolatrous people...

The Assyrians were notorious with their savage practices especially in war time... you may have seen pictures of some of the clay tablets found in Nineveh showing horrible acts of decapitating their slaves... one tablet illustrates mounds of decapitated heads piled like pyramids... they were a treacherous people. ... these are the people that God instructed Jonah to go and preach to.

God basically says to Jonah... *“These people are worth saving”... I want you to go and I want you to preach a message of repentance... repentance from their horrendous sins....short story shorter....* Jonah eventually goes and preached to them

And the Ninevites repented!... they turned to the One true God... the God of our Bible.... And God shows mercy to them!... you might wonder *“why would God show mercy to these barbarians?... they definitely DO NOT deserve His mercy”....*

That’s the point... **nobody deserves God’s mercy!**... you and I don’t deserve God’s mercy.... That great verse in Jonah 4:2 when Jonah says **For I knew You were a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and the one who relents concerning evil.**

There is NOTHING YOU CAN DO TO DESERVE GOD’S MERCY..... and not one person in this building this morning deserves God’s mercy!

That message so vividly shown in Jonah... that no matter what you’ve done... no matter how sinful you have been and are...God is gracious and compassionate.... And through your repentance.... will relent concerning your evil!...AMEN?...and the Assyrians did just that.

When you get to the book of Nahum... it is about one hundred years later... in case you were wondering what happened to the Ninevites... perhaps wondering why there are no Ninevites on earth today... Nahum is the sequel to Jonah... and it doesn’t take long reading Nahum to realize things have drastically changed for Nineveh...

Remember.... What God thinks of you is the most important thing?... well... God thoughts about Nineveh took a nosedive.

Instead of God’s great mercy... God is very...very angry at Nineveh... His wrath is about to pour out on the city and the Assyrians.... They had gone back to their evil ways...they are now worse than they were before..

You must wonder what happened?... what happened in those 100 years?... all the people of Nineveh... the king himself making a decree for all people to turn from their evil ways and call on the one and only true God.... What happened?

I have some ideas...

1. Remember last week referring to Israel... I said three things (or more!) happen to a people who becomes more and more affluent and prosperous...add to that successful...

1. Corruption raises its head.
2. Injustice goes rampant.
3. Faith in God is exchanged with self-reliance.

The Assyrians over those 100 years had become extremely affluent, prosperous and successful...they were the mightiest of all empires of the day.... And following human nature... as pride increases.... *"We are so powerful... We did all this"*.... Corruption raised its head, injustice went rampant ... and in their praise of the self.... No longer needed or even thought of God any more.... And they return again to their sinful lives.

2. I think also the generation that repented and God relented... failed to raise the next generation in the faith of the true God... by the fourth generation... God was not even a distant memory!... I'm afraid this is happening in our day...

Al Mohler wrote this in Familylife...(some a paraphrase)

Researchers George Gallup and Jim Castelli put the problem squarely: "Americans [do not read the Bible anymore] And because they don't read it, they have become a nation of biblical illiterates." This is a failure on the generation that WAS reading the Bible and NOT passing it on to their children for whatever reasons.

*Fewer than half of all adults can name the four Gospels. Many Christians cannot identify more than two or three of the disciples. According to data from the Barna Research Group, 60 percent of Americans can't name even five of the Ten Commandments. "No wonder people break the Ten Commandments all the time. They don't know what they are," "Increasingly, America is biblically illiterate." ...results?... **they no longer know God.***

Multiple surveys reveal the problem in stark terms. According to 82 percent of Americans, "God helps those who help themselves," is a Bible verse. Those identified as born-again Christians did better—by one percent.

Some of the statistics are enough to perplex even those aware of the problem. A Barna poll indicated that at least 12 percent of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife. Another survey of graduating high school seniors revealed that over 50 percent thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife. A considerable number of respondents to one poll indicated that the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Billy Graham.... We are in big trouble.

Secularized Americans should not be expected to be knowledgeable about the Bible. As the nation's civic conversation is stripped of all biblical references and content, Americans increasingly live in a Scripture-free public space. Confusion and ignorance of the Bible's content should be assumed in post-Christian America.

How can a generation be biblically shaped in its understanding of human sexuality when it believes Sodom and Gomorrah to be a married couple? Many who identify themselves as Christians are similarly confused about the gospel itself. An individual who believes that "God

helps those who help themselves” will find salvation by grace and justification by faith to be alien concepts.

Bottom line.... The previous generations failed to teach the succeeding generations about the God of the Bible...

Don't think that Nahum's prophesy about Nineveh is not a warning for us... in many ways our culture is not that much different than the Assyrians...in fact... **Nahum's words are for all nations of all times...**

Nahum most likely lived the same time as Isaiah... Isaiah also writes about this judgement to come on Assyria...listen to this:

Isaiah 14:24-27

24 The Lord of armies has sworn, saying, “Certainly, just as I have intended, so it has happened, and just as I have planned, so it will stand, 25 to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will be removed from them, and his burden removed from their shoulders. 26 This is the plan [a]devised against the entire earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations. 27 For the Lord of armies has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?”

Any nation who has turned their back on God will experience the wrath of almighty God!...

So... Nahum is all about the coming wrath of God upon Nineveh and the Assyrians... **Chapter 1** is not about Nineveh... it is not about Nahum... it is all about God... this is a vital passage in all of Scripture.... And it certainly is an appropriate place for this prophesy to begin....we'll look at that in a minute.

Chapters 2 and 3 are specifically about the coming destruction of Nineveh and the condemnation of the Assyrian people.... I said that Nahum means *comforter*... He is telling all this to Israel not Assyria...**God's no longer warning Assyria...** they're days are over!.... God wants to comfort Israel in their difficult times being mistreated and oppressed by the Assyrians... by telling them the justice that will fall on their oppressors.

God wants all His people to know that He is a faithful God... that He cares for His people... that He will protect His people... He wants His people to know He is there for them... He is in control of all things... HE IS THE STANDARD... WE ARE NOT!!!that He is faithful to them EVEN WHEN THEY'RE NOT TO HIM!. That's why he says in 1:15

**Behold, on the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news,
Who announces peace!
Celebrate your feasts, Judah,
Pay your vows..**

**For never again will the wicked one pass through you;
He is eliminated completely.**

Back to chapter 1.... The first fifteen verses really make up a masterpiece of a poem... not only are the words God breathed to Nahum (**all scripture is God breathed...**)... they are intentionally artistically relayed to us... I think God speaks to us in poetry at times to show us the beauty of God's word... If you've ever studied poetry... at least poetry over a hundred years old...

Poetry uses the most concise... full ...meaningful words in all of language... Chapter 1 is a great example... it is an "*acrostic*"... Each section of the poem begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew Alphabet...

The first letter in the Hebrew alphabet is "Aleph"... the first section begins at verse 2 with the first letter being the Aleph.... in the middle of verse 3 is the second section and it begins with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet "Beth".... And so on down through the first ten letters of the alphabet.... Psalm 119 is also written in this way.... Acrostic.

The poem is all about God... What does it say about God?

(2) **A jealous and avenging God is Yahweh**... this is not human jealousy... "it conveys the idea of burning zeal".... "*The thought is that of a feeling of injured justice... and a strong desire to see the right accomplished*"—C. Feinberg

The closest thing we might be able to relate to is the feeling you have when you find out someone has cheated on you or cheated you.... You feel violated... you feel the injustice of the situation and you have a strong desire to set it right....

God is jealous when He is cheated on!... when His people place anything higher than Him in their lives... and He desires to set it right! "The source of God's jealousy is His great love for His people... and He will vindicate the wrongs done to them!".... **THAT'S WHAT NAHUM IS ABOUT!**

Listen to the poetry:

Read verse 3

Isn't that beautiful?... the invading Assyrian army kicked up the dust from the road as they invaded... but God!... God kicks up the clouds as though they were dust under His feet!... His attributes flow from the page....

He is omnipotent.... All powerful....

Read verses 4-6

And here is the key

(7) Yahweh is good...

People don't like the Old Testament because to them God appears as an angry, wrathful, horribly mean God... a God who make desolate complete nations... who annihilates certain people... who turns people into pillars of salt.... "We love the God of the New Testament!"... the gracious loving God.

God is not "good" if He tolerates sin... He is not good if He does not punish those who advance wickedness.... Yahweh is good if you as it says in verse 7 **take refuge in Him**...another way to say that would be **the Lord is good to those who place their hope in Him**... those who become His children.... BUT

Read verse 8

"But if you are against Me...(how you are thinking of God!!!).. **My wrath will fall upon you!** (How God is thinking about you!!!).

Read verses 12-13

God is a jealous and avenging God... He is all powerful...He is in complete control of the universe and everything in it... **God is good!**

There is a much overused word today... it has lost it's meaning from overuse...but in its original meaning it is the best summary of chapter 1.... what do you think of when you hear the word "**awesome**"?... the new Apple iPhone 13 Pro Max?...

The Apple iPhone 13 Pro Max IS NOT AWESOME!... it's just a fancy telephone that will be obsolete in six months!...it is not awesome!... today the word has come to refer to anything that is just *better than average*...

My three year old grandson jumps over a log.... "*That was AWESOME!*"... or he shows me a picture of a truck he just drew...even though it looks like spilled paint I will say....and mean it "*That is awesome!*"..... even though it is MY GRANDSON.... IT IS NOT AWESOME!

Awesome is found 38 times in the Bible... 35 of those refer specifically to God Himself....awesome means: *Inspiring awe = awe means profound fear... profoundly reverential... inspiring dread... terror... fright...* THAT IS NOT AN APPLE Iphone13 Pro Max!... those are words only attributable to God!

"Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, *awesome* in glorious deeds, doing wonders? (Ex 15:11)

"Come and see what God has done: he is *awesome* in his deeds toward the children of man". (Ps 66:5)

"And I said, "O Lord God of heaven, the great and *awesome* God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments" (Neh. 1:5).

"*Awesome* is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God! (Ps 68:35)

GOD IS AWESOME!...GOD INSPIRES AWE.... I AM AFRAID OF HIM!... I Love Him but I am terrified of Him and it reveals in being reverent to Him...God is AWESOME!

I want to come back to this...what I think is the essence of all this...But first let's see some specifics of what will happen to Nineveh...

Chapter 2....for many, many years... the Assyrians have plundered other nations... scattering their people... so now...Nahum prophesies this to the Assyrians:

(2:1) The one who scatters has come against you... You are going to be scattered Assyria!

Guard the fortress!.... watch the road!!!... get all your stuff all your guns all your amazing weapons... keep an eye on the road..... are you watching?!...strengthen your loins...instill YOUR power with exceeding courage..... what a joke!... God is the One who will scatter...God is in pursuit!

All that is sarcasm.... It really pokes fun at all of us who think we are really something...[go on Jonah?]especially standing next to the Almighty!... we really think we are something special.... God is jabbing us.... *come on... give it all you got!*

Give me all you've got..... it won't affect a thing.... because:

Read verse 2

This is not talking about the two kingdoms Judah and Israel... by now the northern kingdom Israel had been conquered...many years before.... This is talking about Judah... repeatedly the Assyrians attacked Judah...destroying their crops... their cities.... Their vineyards...but God says He will restore them....Judah.

Then Nahum tells about the invading armies that will decimate the Assyrians... these would be the Babylonians and the Medes...you think the Assyrians were treacherous... everything that the Assyrians did... the Babylonians and Medes did to them....listen to these words:

(2:3) The shields of the mighty men are colored red, the valiant men are dressed in scarlet...

They loved red... red was intimidating... common practice was for ancient warriors to dye their bull's hide shields red to frighten the enemy... also to disguise their own wounds so the enemy wouldn't see their weakness.

But the chariots...The most treacherous war machine of the day...they would fasten sharp steel scythes...blades.... at right angles to the axels of the chariots and turned downwards... as the chariot would race down the streets slicing bystanders as they went.... Horrible.

The picture here is intentionally horrible...

Read verses 4-9

Nineveh is destroyed.... Let me describe Nineveh a little so you can get the impact;

- Nineveh was designed to be invincible to invading armies.
- Its walls were 100 feet high... wide enough at the top for four chariots to go abreast.
- The circumference of its walls were 80+ miles... almost from here to Couer D Alene...
- There were 1200 defense towers dispersed along the walls.
- There was a moat 140 feet wide and 60 feet deep around the entire circumference of the walls.

Nineveh had everything but one thing.... they did not have Yahweh!...

Read 2:13

Interesting... but Nineveh was so completely destroyed it soon disappeared off the map... in fact... the absence of any ruins of Nineveh is what made many critics throughout history to doubt it ever existed in the first place... it was all a made up tale... Jonah... the fish... and Nineveh... the Assyrian city was a myth!

In 331BC... when Alexander the Great fought the battle at Arbella... which is right where Nineveh was... he didn't even know there was a Nineveh there... He thought the lumps of stone were just poorly taken care of and neglected structures.

Nineveh disappeared completely until 1845 when a British archeologist Austin Layard uncovered Nineveh... over 22000 clay tablets that detailed life in Nineveh at that time...they uncovered the walls... the ruins... what was left.

A few things from **chapter three:**

Why did God specifically do all this?... why the anger and wrath?...Judgment?

(3:1) Woe to the city of bloodshed, completely full of deception and pillage....

(3:4-5) All because of the many harlotries of the harlot, the charming one, the mistress of sorceries, who sells nations by her harlotries, and families by her sorceries. BEHOLD I AM AGAINST YOU DECLARES YAHWEH OF HOSTS.

What did the harlot do?... what is it that God is really angered at...why is His wrath being unleashed?... it all points back to chapter one... who God is. I think this is the big truth we are to see in all this... this is vital.

Going back to where we started...Tozer... *What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.*

C.S Lewis...*How God thinks of us is not only more important, but infinitely more important. Indeed, how we think of Him is of no importance except in so far as it is related to how He thinks of us....*

How do you think of yourself every day?... it's all day!... I'm hungry I need food... I want that iPhone... I need that new car... I don't appreciate how you're treating me... I don't like you , you bother me... I want you to marry ME...

Have you ever thought about just being mean to yourself for a day?... *"I'm hungry"*... *"So what be hungry!"*...

But it goes further...we say things like Jesus died for me... I should accept Jesus so I can go to heaven... heaven is for me.... The Bible is for me... God wrote the Bible for MEEEEEE!