



gracefellowship

Series: Summer Shorts
Date: July 23, 2023

Title: Finally! Justice!
Passage: Nahum 1-3

Scripture: Nahum 1-3

Over the past couple weeks we have been looking at some short books with big messages in the Old Testament. These books often get overlooked when we read the Bible because we don't know what to do with them, or we don't understand them, or don't have context for why they are important.

The first book we looked at was Habakkuk, a prophet who was raising complaints against God because everywhere he looked he saw violence and injustice...and God didn't seem to be doing anything about it. Habakkuk helped us realize that God is not turning a blind eye to injustice, but will deal with it in His timing and in His way.

Next we looked at Jonah, a prophet who was angry because God's initial answer to the violence and injustice he saw in the world was not judgment, but grace and forgiveness. Jonah wants to die because his enemies receive a second chance. God sees the potential of people to be changed and live in relationship with Him. He is slow to anger and abounding in love, He is compassionate and gracious and faithful.

Today we are going to look at the book of Nahum and we are going to see the way God does ultimately bring punishment on the Assyrian Empire and the capital city of Nineveh.

Here's what you need to know before we read the text today:

1. Nahum was written to Israel, not Assyria. After 200 years of Assyrian dominance in the region and all the violence and horror these people had brought to the surrounding nations, God is finally going to deal with the wickedness they brought into the world. So, why is this written to Israel and not to Nineveh? It's meant to convey hope and peace to the people of Israel. God is telling them after all they have suffered at the hands of Assyria, a time of relief is coming.

2. This is written 100 years after Jonah. When we studied Jonah last week we saw the people of Nineveh repent. However, it was short-lived and they went back to their wicked ways. Now God is ready to bring justice against these people and their wickedness.

3. Nahum is written 10-15 years before the destruction of Nineveh and the fall of the Assyrian Empire. The things he says in this book are looking ahead to that time, not in response to it. Yet, everything Nahum said, came to pass. While God had allowed the wickedness of Nineveh to go unpunished for 200 years, justice happens on God's timeline. We have to remember that God is slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, but He does not overlook sin and evil.

4. Babylon, along with the Medes, destroyed Nineveh around 612 BC and it was lost to history until archeologists discovered the ruins in 1842 north of the city of Mosul, Iraq.

With that as the backdrop for the book, let's read it together this morning.

:: Nahum 1

1 A prophecy concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

**2 The Lord is a jealous and avenging God;
the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath.**

**The Lord takes vengeance on his foes
and vents his wrath against his enemies.**

**3 The Lord is slow to anger but great in power;
the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished.**

**His way is in the whirlwind and the storm,
and clouds are the dust of his feet.**

**4 He rebukes the sea and dries it up;
he makes all the rivers run dry.**

**Bashan and Carmel wither
and the blossoms of Lebanon fade.**

**5 The mountains quake before him
and the hills melt away.**

**The earth trembles at his presence,
the world and all who live in it.**

**6 Who can withstand his indignation?
Who can endure his fierce anger?**

**His wrath is poured out like fire;
the rocks are shattered before him.**

**7 The Lord is good,
a refuge in times of trouble.**

He cares for those who trust in him,

8 but with an overwhelming flood
he will make an end of Nineveh;
he will pursue his foes into the realm of darkness.

9 Whatever they plot against the Lord
he will bring^[a] to an end;
trouble will not come a second time.

10 They will be entangled among thorns
and drunk from their wine;
they will be consumed like dry stubble.^[b]

11 From you, Nineveh, has one come forth
who plots evil against the Lord
and devises wicked plans.

12 This is what the Lord says:
“Although they have allies and are numerous,
they will be destroyed and pass away.
Although I have afflicted you, Judah,
I will afflict you no more.

13 Now I will break their yoke from your neck
and tear your shackles away.”

14 The Lord has given a command concerning you, Nineveh:
“You will have no descendants to bear your name.
I will destroy the images and idols
that are in the temple of your gods.
I will prepare your grave,
for you are vile.”

15 Look, there on the mountains,
the feet of one who brings good news,
who proclaims peace!
Celebrate your festivals, Judah,
and fulfill your vows.
No more will the wicked invade you;
they will be completely destroyed.^[c]

:: Nahum 2

^[a]1 An attacker advances against you, Nineveh.

Guard the fortress,
watch the road,
brace yourselves,
marshal all your strength!

² The Lord will restore the splendor of Jacob
like the splendor of Israel,
though destroyers have laid them waste
and have ruined their vines.

3 The shields of the soldiers are red;
the warriors are clad in scarlet.
The metal on the chariots flashes
on the day they are made ready;
the spears of juniper are brandished.^[b]

4 The chariots storm through the streets,
rushing back and forth through the squares.
They look like flaming torches;
they dart about like lightning.

5 Nineveh summons her picked troops,
yet they stumble on their way.
They dash to the city wall;
the protective shield is put in place.

6 The river gates are thrown open
and the palace collapses.

7 It is decreed^[c] that Nineveh
be exiled and carried away.
Her female slaves moan like doves
and beat on their breasts.

8 Nineveh is like a pool
whose water is draining away.
“Stop! Stop!” they cry,
but no one turns back.

9 Plunder the silver!
Plunder the gold!
The supply is endless,
the wealth from all its treasures!

10 She is pillaged, plundered, stripped!
Hearts melt, knees give way,
bodies tremble, every face grows pale.

11 Where now is the lions’ den,
the place where they fed their young,
where the lion and lioness went,
and the cubs, with nothing to fear?

12 The lion killed enough for his cubs
and strangled the prey for his mate,
filling his lairs with the kill
and his dens with the prey.

13 “I am against you,”
declares the Lord Almighty.
“I will burn up your chariots in smoke,
and the sword will devour your young lions.
I will leave you no prey on the earth.”

**The voices of your messengers
will no longer be heard.”**

:: Nahum 3

**1 Woe to the city of blood,
full of lies,
full of plunder,
never without victims!**

**2 The crack of whips,
the clatter of wheels,
galloping horses
and jolting chariots!**

**3 Charging cavalry,
flashing swords
and glittering spears!**

**Many casualties,
piles of dead,
bodies without number,
people stumbling over the corpses—**

**4 all because of the wanton lust of a prostitute,
alluring, the mistress of sorceries,
who enslaved nations by her prostitution
and peoples by her witchcraft.**

**5 “I am against you,” declares the Lord Almighty.
“I will lift your skirts over your face.
I will show the nations your nakedness
and the kingdoms your shame.**

**6 I will pelt you with filth,
I will treat you with contempt
and make you a spectacle.**

**7 All who see you will flee from you and say,
‘Nineveh is in ruins—who will mourn for her?’
Where can I find anyone to comfort you?”**

**8 Are you better than Thebes,
situated on the Nile,
with water around her?
The river was her defense,
the waters her wall.**

**9 Cush^[a] and Egypt were her boundless strength;
Put and Libya were among her allies.**

**10 Yet she was taken captive
and went into exile.**

Her infants were dashed to pieces

at every street corner.
Lots were cast for her nobles,
and all her great men were put in chains.
11 You too will become drunk;
you will go into hiding
and seek refuge from the enemy.
12 All your fortresses are like fig trees
with their first ripe fruit;
when they are shaken,
the figs fall into the mouth of the eater.
13 Look at your troops—
they are all weaklings.
The gates of your land
are wide open to your enemies;
fire has consumed the bars of your gates.
14 Draw water for the siege,
strengthen your defenses!
Work the clay,
tread the mortar,
repair the brickwork!
15 There the fire will consume you;
the sword will cut you down—
they will devour you like a swarm of locusts.
Multiply like grasshoppers,
multiply like locusts!
16 You have increased the number of your merchants
till they are more numerous than the stars in the sky,
but like locusts they strip the land
and then fly away.
17 Your guards are like locusts,
your officials like swarms of locusts
that settle in the walls on a cold day—
but when the sun appears they fly away,
and no one knows where.
18 King of Assyria, your shepherds^[b] slumber;
your nobles lie down to rest.
Your people are scattered on the mountains
with no one to gather them.
19 Nothing can heal you;
your wound is fatal.
All who hear the news about you
clap their hands at your fall,

**for who has not felt
your endless cruelty?**

Nahum starts off vastly different than Jonah. From the very beginning of the book we see a very poetic structure, rather than narrative, and a fiery tone that pronounces judgment from the very beginning with no hope of repentance.

:: Nahum 1:2-8 (Screens only, not for app)

**²The Lord is a jealous and avenging God;
the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath.**

**The Lord takes vengeance on his foes
and vents his wrath against his enemies.**

**³The Lord is slow to anger but great in power;
the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished.**

**His way is in the whirlwind and the storm,
and clouds are the dust of his feet.**

**⁴He rebukes the sea and dries it up;
he makes all the rivers run dry.**

**Bashan and Carmel wither
and the blossoms of Lebanon fade.**

**⁵The mountains quake before him
and the hills melt away.**

**The earth trembles at his presence,
the world and all who live in it.**

**⁶Who can withstand his indignation?
Who can endure his fierce anger?**

**His wrath is poured out like fire;
the rocks are shattered before him.**

**⁷The Lord is good,
a refuge in times of trouble.**

He cares for those who trust in him,

⁸ but with an overwhelming flood

he will make an end of Nineveh;

he will pursue his foes into the realm of darkness.

God wants us to know that while He is slow to anger, His patience must not be mistaken for powerlessness.

God's patience must not be mistaken for powerlessness.

This has kind of been the theme of these 3 weeks: God is slow to anger abounding in love, but eventually judgment must come. And God knows the right way and the right time to bring perfect judgment. Our role is to trust God's plan and learn to see the world the way He sees it.

The book of Nahum moves rapidly between metaphors, pictures and poetic language to describe God's activity to bless and destroy. Remember, this is a message of comfort and hope for Israel. God balances the message of destruction for His enemies and hope for His people.

:: Nahum 1:12-15 (*Screens only*)

¹² This is what the Lord says:

**“Although they have allies and are numerous,
they will be destroyed and pass away.**

**Although I have afflicted you, Judah,
I will afflict you no more.**

**¹³ Now I will break their yoke from your neck
and tear your shackles away.”**

¹⁴ The Lord has given a command concerning you, Nineveh:

“You will have no descendants to bear your name.

**I will destroy the images and idols
that are in the temple of your gods.**

**I will prepare your grave,
for you are vile.”**

**¹⁵ Look, there on the mountains,
the feet of one who brings good news,
who proclaims peace!**

**Celebrate your festivals, Judah,
and fulfill your vows.**

**No more will the wicked invade you;
they will be completely destroyed**

Remember what we said earlier this morning. Nahum is writing a decade or more before Assyria falls to Babylon, but his prophecy is 100% accurate. When God says He is going to destroy the city and they will have no descendants to bear their name, He meant it. The city was destroyed in 612 BC and no trace of it was seen or heard from again until archeologists discovered the ruins in 1842!

The Fall of Nineveh

Chapter 2 describes the destruction of the city of Nineveh when Babylon sieges it. We see Nahum detail how the walls will be attacked, the river gates thrown open, the palace collapses, they plunder the silver and gold- Nahum even says the supply is endless (vs. 9).

Archeology tells us that among the ruins of Nineveh they have found very few coins of any kind, which is unusual, but fits prophecy.

Then when we get to chapter 3 we find a description of how God exposes Nineveh for her crimes. The essence of the chapter is that because Assyria had been so destructive, the nation would be destroyed and humiliated.

:: Nahum 3:1-7 (*Screens only*)

**1 Woe to the city of blood,
full of lies,
full of plunder,
never without victims!**

**2 The crack of whips,
the clatter of wheels,
galloping horses
and jolting chariots!**

**3 Charging cavalry,
flashing swords
and glittering spears!**

**Many casualties,
piles of dead,
bodies without number,
people stumbling over the corpses—**

**4 all because of the wanton lust of a prostitute,
alluring, the mistress of sorceries,
who enslaved nations by her prostitution
and peoples by her witchcraft.**

**5 “I am against you,” declares the Lord Almighty.
“I will lift your skirts over your face.
I will show the nations your nakedness
and the kingdoms your shame.**

**6 I will pelt you with filth,
I will treat you with contempt
and make you a spectacle.**

**7 All who see you will flee from you and say,
‘Nineveh is in ruins—who will mourn for her?’
Where can I find anyone to comfort you?’”**

God’s final word about Nineveh closes the book, but gives us a perspective of how the nations around this dominant power feel about God’s judgment on them.

:: Nahum 3:18-19 (*Screens only*)

**18 King of Assyria, your shepherds^[b] slumber;
your nobles lie down to rest.**

**Your people are scattered on the mountains
with no one to gather them.**

**19 Nothing can heal you;
your wound is fatal.**

**All who hear the news about you
clap their hands at your fall,
for who has not felt
your endless cruelty?**

After all the death and destruction the Assyrians have brought on the world there is finally justice from God. Israel will experience a season of peace, and the hope is that after all they have been through they will walk in humility before God and will honor Him, obeying His Word. But we know that isn't going to last long either because Babylon is the next nation God will use as an instrument to discipline His people in their rebelliousness. The cycle continues of the people of God rebelling and God doing whatever is necessary to get their attention and win them back.

QUESTION: The question then for us is: How do we approach God and understand what He is doing in the world today as a result of this book?

There are really two things for us to think about today as Christians looking at this text. We have the benefit of the cross of Jesus in our lives, so we have a different perspective than Israel or Assyria or Babylon would have had during this time period when Nahum was written. This morning I hope to answer two questions for us as we think about this text:

If God is slow to anger, but will not leave the guilty unpunished...

1. How does God act toward believers when we sin?

2. How is God going to handle the final judgment of the nations and the people who have rejected Him?

Let's deal with each of these quickly as we will wrap up this series.

1. How does God act toward believers when we sin?

When Christians sin we face God's discipline, not His destruction.

Because Jesus has paid our penalty for sin on the cross we are not doomed to ultimate destruction. However, that does not give us a license to sin and act any way we want. We have been called to a life of holiness. We are to set ourselves apart from the world by living like Jesus. Because God loves us, like a parent loves a child, when we rebel and have sin in our lives, God disciplines us. His discipline is always born out of love and with the intent to restore relationship.

As we walk in this world as followers of Jesus we must maintain a fear and admiration for God that keeps us off the path of sin. Recently I was listening to a Pastor who was talking about an interview he did with Jim Bakker in prison. Jim

and his wife Tammy Faye were some of the early American celebrity TV Evangelists in the health, wealth and prosperity gospel movement. Jim Bakker ended up in prison after having an affair, being accused of sexual misconduct, being indicted on 8 counts of mail fraud, 15 counts of wire fraud and one count of conspiracy.

In this interview Jim Bakker said, "This prison was not God's judgment on my life- it was His mercy! If I would have continued to live the way I was living I would have been separated from God forever in hell."

The interviewer asked: Jim, when did you fall out of love with Jesus? Jim said, "I didn't! I loved Him all the way through it. I didn't fear God. And there are millions of Americans just like me who love Jesus but have no fear of God."

Even for His children God does not overlook our sin. He will not destroy us, but He will discipline us- sometimes harshly- in order to set us back on the path of faithfulness.

I think one of the lessons of Nahum is that we should humble ourselves before God so that God doesn't have to humble us!

:: I Peter 5:5b-6

5 "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

:: James 4:6-10

6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

"God opposes the proud

but shows favor to the humble."^[a]

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Don't be so arrogant as to think that if you are living in sin and walking outside of fellowship with God that He is overlooking that offense. Yes, your sin has been paid for on the cross of Jesus, but God's loving hand of discipline will come to guide you back home. When we ask the question: When is God going to do something about all the sin in our world, we need to first ask, "When is God going to do something about my sin?" My sin nailed Jesus to the cross and God is not pleased with me when I continue to walk in sinful ways rather than working in the power of the Holy Spirit to put sin to death. Humble yourself, Christian, and don't make light of sin in your life.

Here's the second question I want to try to deal with today:
How is God going to handle the final judgment of the nations and the people who have rejected Him?

In the New Testament, especially in Revelation, Babylon is once again referenced, but this time as a modern city that the entire world calls it's capital. In essence the world we live in today is Babylon. A day is coming when Jesus will return and will bring final justice to the nations of the world. Every nation will have to give account to Jesus whether we lived for Him or lived for the pleasures of Babylon.

Revelation 18 paints the picture of the final judgment against the world when Jesus returns. It's a lengthy passage, but I want to read it together this morning.

:: Revelation 18

1 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor.

2 With a mighty voice he shouted:

“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!”^[a]

**She has become a dwelling for demons
and a haunt for every impure spirit,
a haunt for every unclean bird,
a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal.**

**3 For all the nations have drunk
the maddening wine of her adulteries.**

**The kings of the earth committed adultery with her,
and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.”**

4 Then I heard another voice from heaven say:

**“Come out of her, my people,^[b]
so that you will not share in her sins,
so that you will not receive any of her plagues;**

**5 for her sins are piled up to heaven,
and God has remembered her crimes.**

**6 Give back to her as she has given;
pay her back double for what she has done.
Pour her a double portion from her own cup.**

**7 Give her as much torment and grief
as the glory and luxury she gave herself.**

**In her heart she boasts,
'I sit enthroned as queen.**

**I am not a widow;^[c]
I will never mourn.'**

**8 Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her:
death, mourning and famine.**

**She will be consumed by fire,
for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.**

9 “When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her.

10 Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry:

**“Woe! Woe to you, great city,
you mighty city of Babylon!**

In one hour your doom has come!’

11 “The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes anymore—

12 cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble;

13 cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and human beings sold as slaves.

14 “They will say, ‘The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your luxury and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.’

15 The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn

16 and cry out:

**“Woe! Woe to you, great city,
dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet,
and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!**

17 In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!’

“Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off.

18 When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, ‘Was there ever a city like this great city?’

19 They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out:

**“Woe! Woe to you, great city,
where all who had ships on the sea
became rich through her wealth!**

In one hour she has been brought to ruin!’

20 “Rejoice over her, you heavens!

Rejoice, you people of God!

Rejoice, apostles and prophets!

For God has judged her

with the judgment she imposed on you.”

21 Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said:

**“With such violence
the great city of Babylon will be thrown down,
never to be found again.
22 The music of harpists and musicians, pipers and trumpeters,
will never be heard in you again.
No worker of any trade
will ever be found in you again.
The sound of a millstone
will never be heard in you again.
23 The light of a lamp
will never shine in you again.
The voice of bridegroom and bride
will never be heard in you again.
Your merchants were the world’s important people.
By your magic spell all the nations were led astray.
24 In her was found the blood of prophets and of God’s holy people,
of all who have been slaughtered on the earth.”**

Did you notice any similarities in the language from Nahum that John uses when describing the final judgment? There are a lot similarities in the language here because all through the Old Testament God is constantly giving us a commercial of the big picture things He is doing in world history- He isn’t just interested in the current moment, He is working all things together for His purposes.

Now, there is a big difference we see at the end and Nahum and in Revelation. When Assyria falls the surrounding nations celebrate and applaud the destruction of this evil nation. In Revelation, when Babylon falls the nations mourn because everyone is entwined in the sin and deception of this city who leads the world to rebel against Jesus. The only ones who rejoice are the heavens and the people of God, because God finally brings judgment against those who have persecuted the Church in the Tribulation.

Here’s the final message to wrap up this series as we have talked about violence, oppression, injustice and persecution of God’s people and have asked, “What is God doing about all the wrongs in the world?”

**We await the return of Jesus to right every wrong and judge every evil.
Jesus will defeat sin, so we must not give up as we wait for His ultimate
comfort to be revealed.**

:: Isaiah 48:3

**3 I foretold the former things long ago,
my mouth announced them and I made them known;
then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.**

What God has said He will do, He will do! Final justice will come in His timing and in His way. Humble yourself before God and wait on Him.

Prayer Team Available

Dave Schubert will give a brief overview of the 2023-24 GFC Budget to close the service.