

# Seeing Jesus in the Minor Prophets

Nahum

## Historical Background

- Finally, we begin to get a nice smooth chronology! Jonah preached to the Ninevites some time between 775-750 B.C. Then, Micah prophesied in Judah between 742-686 B.C. Now, we come to Nahum who, like Jonah, had a message for Nineveh sometime between 660-610 B.C.. We have some certainty of this date because it refers to the fall of Thebes (664 B.C.) as a past event and the fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.) as a future event.
- So, when we last left Nineveh at the end of the book of Jonah (775-750), Nineveh had experienced a tremendous revival. 120,000 people repented of their sin and put their faith in the on true God. The question is, did it stick? Did the generations that followed also put their trust in God alone? Let's find out as we look at...

## The Message of Nahum

### An interesting tid-bit

- A few weeks back we pointed out that the Old Testament Jews considered the Minor Prophets, as a whole, a single book. They called it the book of the twelve. One reasons for this was that there seems to be a connection between the ending of one book and the beginning of the next. The end of Hosea is a plea for repentance and the beginning of Joel is a plea for repentance. The end of Joel pictures the Lord as roaring lion and the beginning of Amos pictures the Lord as a roaring lion. The end of Amos mentions coming judgement upon the Edomites and the beginning (as well as the end and middle) of Obadiah is about God judging the Edomites. The end of Obadiah promises that God will greatly expand the borders of his kingdom and in Jonah God sends his prophet into a foreign land where he does indeed expand his kingdom by 120,000. The end of Jonah ends with a declaration of care for the people's livestock and Micah 2 shows us that we are God's flock and he will care for us and lead us forever. Now for this weeks connection. Micah ends his prophecy with a song, a hymn of victory over enemies. Nahum begins his prophecy with a song, and is all about God victoriously defeating the oppressors of his people Judah.

### 1. A Psalm to God: Chapter 1:2-8

- ❖ Nahum 1:2-8--*The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. 3 The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. 4 He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; he dries up all the rivers; Bashan and Carmel wither; the bloom of Lebanon withers. The mountains quake before him; the hills melt; the earth heaves before him, the world and all who dwell in it. 6 Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him. 7 The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. 8 But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.*

- Three things to see in this passage

#### (1) God's person

- This passage is full of rich truth about the very heart of God. For many of us, when we hear the phrase "the heart of God," we tend to think of his compassion, love, and mercy. Yet we see in this passage that God's heart is also jealous, vengeful, and wrathful. God's heart is

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jealous meaning that he hates it when people ascribe ultimate worth to that which is ultimately worthless. God's heart is vengeful meaning that he will repay sin with wrath. God's heart is wrathful meaning that he is furiously hot with anger toward sinners.

- It is important to notice that this is not merely the heart of the Father. It is also the heart of Jesus. After all, doesn't the book of Hebrews tells us...
  - ❖ Hebrews 1:3--*He [Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature*

#### (2) God's power

- Nahum describes the Lord as "great in power." He then goes on to illustrate just how great God's power is. Among other descriptions, Nahum describes God as one who rides on the clouds and "rebukes the sea and makes it dry." Upon hearing these words, I can't help but think of passages like...
  - ❖ Mark 14:61-62--*Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" 62 And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."*
  - ❖ Revelation 1:7--*Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.*
  - ❖ Mark 4:38-39, 41--*...they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" 39 And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm...41 And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"*
- So just as the "rebukes the sea and makes it dry," the divine Son rebukes the wind and the waves and brings great calm.

#### (3) God's posture

- Nahum reveals that who you are has tremendous significance toward how God treats you. If you are one of his people, one of those who "take refuge in him" he is a stronghold for you. A place of safety and shelter amidst disaster.
- However, if you are not one of his people, he will pursue you into darkness. Ultimately, that means the eternal fires of hell.

## 2. The end of the line for Nineveh, The end of oppression for Judah: Chapter 1:9-15

- ❖ Nahum 1:9-15--*What do you plot against the Lord? He will make a complete end; trouble will not rise up a second time. 10 For they are like entangled thorns, like drunkards as they drink; they are consumed like stubble fully dried. 11 From you came one who plotted evil against the Lord, a worthless counselor. 12 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." 14 The Lord has given commandment about you: "No more shall your name be perpetuated; from the house of your gods I will cut off the carved image and the metal image. I will make your grave, for you are vile." 15 Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace! Keep your feasts, O Judah; fulfill your vows, for never again shall the worthless pass through you; he is utterly cut off.*

- This portion of the text reveals three things...

#### (1) It's the end of the line for Nineveh, It's the end of oppression for Judah

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- The message to Nineveh is quite clear. Though you guys are the biggest, baddest kids on the block, to God you are nothing and now, because of your wickedness, your destruction will be thorough.
- The message to Judah was one of great comfort. The Assyrians had already conquered their neighbors to the north (Israel) in 722 B.C.. They had already conquered all of Judah's fortified cities in during the reign of Hezekiah. They would have gone on to conquer Jerusalem itself had it not been for the miraculous work of God in which 185,000 Assyrian warriors were slain in a single night. In Nahum's day, they have their own king but they aren't completely free in that they are a vassal of Assyria meaning that they had to pay a sort of homage fee. Thus the promise of being rid of the Assyrians for good was indeed exciting news to Judah.

#### (2) The two "ends" are related

- The end of Nineveh and the end of Judah's oppression coinciding are not accidental, nor are they independent. God brings destruction upon Nineveh for two reasons. First, because they're wicked and God will glorify himself as the holy and righteous judge by destroying them. Second, he does it for the love of his people. The only way his people's oppression will end is if that which oppresses them is destroyed.
- Thus we can see that God is glorifying his mighty name by being the righteous judge to the Ninevites and in judging them he is glorifying himself by being the loving savior.

#### (3) All of this points to the gospel of Jesus Christ

- There is a sense in which this portion of Nahum is all about the sweetness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul in his letter to the Romans refers to Nahum 1:15 when he says...
  - ❖ Romans 10:15--*As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"*
- Thus, we see that Judah's deliverance from Assyria is really a type of the Gospel. It was foreshadowing a far greater reality. It foreshadowed our freedom from sin through the work of Christ. For those who hear and respond to this good news, they will never, EVER, again be enslaved to the power of sin! They will never, EVER, again have to live in fear of the wrath of God to come! The enemy of our souls has been "cut off..."
  - ❖ Revelation 12:10--*And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God"*
- Because of this, nothing can stop God's people from coming to him, nothing can stop God's people from growing in him, and nothing can separate God's people from him!

### 3. The Destruction of Nineveh: Chapter 2

- In spite of the darkness of the content, what we are about to read is some of the most beautiful poetry in all of the Old Testament. Only portions of Isaiah come close to Nahum's poetic eloquence. You might be asking yourself, why would Nahum use beautiful poetry to prophesy the destruction of a nation? It will help to remember that the destruction of wicked Nineveh meant freedom for Judah. Though it is uncommon in our day to wax poetically over such a thing, it is indeed worth doing. In fact, it isn't to much different than song writers writing beautiful songs

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about the cross. The cross was indeed a gory and horrid thing, yet it is worthy of songs and poems because of the glorious freedom that it bought us.

❖ Nahum 2-- *1 The scatterer has come up against you. Man the ramparts; watch the road; dress for battle; collect all your strength. 2 For the Lord is restoring the majesty of Jacob as the majesty of Israel, for plunderers have plundered them and ruined their branches. 3 The shield of his mighty men is red; his soldiers are clothed in scarlet. The chariots come with flashing metal on the day he musters them; the cypress spears are brandished. 4 The chariots race madly through the streets; they rush to and fro through the squares; they gleam like torches; they dart like lightning. 5 He remembers his officers; they stumble as they go, they hasten to the wall; the siege tower is set up. 6 The river gates are opened; the palace melts away; 7 its mistress is stripped; she is carried off, her slave girls lamenting, moaning like doves and beating their breasts. 8 Nineveh is like a pool whose waters run away. "Halt! Halt!" they cry, but none turns back. 9 Plunder the silver, plunder the gold! There is no end of the treasure or of the wealth of all precious things. 10 Desolate! Desolation and ruin! Hearts melt and knees tremble; anguish is in all loins; all faces grow pale! 11 Where is the lions' den, the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion and lioness went, where his cubs were, with none to disturb? 12 The lion tore enough for his cubs and strangled prey for his lionesses; he filled his caves with prey and his dens with torn flesh. 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.*

- This would have melted the heart of any Judean. Tears would fill the eyes of many. Through this passage they would have heard the Lord saying to them, "Fear not my people, I have not forgotten you. I am a warrior and because I love you I will fight for you. With might, I will deliver you from your oppressors."
- It might seem strange to say but it ought to have the same affect on us. We too ought to hear the voice of the Lord saying, "Fear not my people, I have not forgotten you. I am a warrior and because I have loved you before the foundations of the world, I have fought for you. I sent my son Jesus to conquer sin and death for you. Because of him, the one who deceived you in the garden has been cast down and now you are free to come to me! I will save you! I will keep you! I have accomplished all of this through my glorious son, Jesus Christ!"

#### 4. Woe to Nineveh: Chapter 3

- Nahum ends his prophecy with an declaration of "Woe" to the Assyrians (Ninevites)...
  - ❖ Nahum 3:1-7--*1 Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder — no end to the prey! 2 The crack of the whip, and rumble of the wheel, galloping horse and bounding chariot! 3 Horsemen charging, flashing sword and glittering spear, hosts of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end — they stumble over the bodies! 4 And all for the countless whorings of the prostitute, graceful and of deadly charms, who betrays nations with her whorings, and peoples with her charms. 5 Behold, I am against you, declares the Lord of hosts, and will lift up your skirts over your face; and I will make nations look at your nakedness and kingdoms at your shame. 6 I will throw filth at you and treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle. 7 And all who look at you will shrink from you and say, "Wasted is Nineveh; who will grieve for her? "Where shall I seek comforters for you?"*
- Here we see Nineveh referred to as a great whore whose whorings were "graceful and of deadly charms." Because of this rulers of nations were lead astray and even the people of the nations lead astray. For those who paid careful attention to Mike's series through the book of Revelation, you might already be thinking, "that sounds quite familiar." You see Nineveh is a type of the great whore in the book of Revelation...

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- ❖ Revelation 17:1-2--*“Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk*
- ❖ Revelation 18:2-3--*“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. 3 For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living*
- So we see that just as Nineveh had lead astray the nations around them and the people of those nations. The whore of Revelation, which represents the wicked people throughout the world, lead the nations of the whole world astray and all the people within them. Furthermore, just as God judged Nineveh and called his people out of Assyrian oppression. So to will he judge the great prostitute (the wicked of this world) and call his people out of her...
- ❖ Revelation 19:1-2--*Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, 2 for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”*
- ❖ Revelation 18:4--*Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; 5 for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities*
- the text concludes...
  - ❖ Nahum 3:8-19 *Are you better than Thebes that sat by the Nile, with water around her, her rampart a sea, and water her wall? 9 Cush was her strength; Egypt too, and that without limit; Put and the Libyans were her helpers. 10 Yet she became an exile; she went into captivity; her infants were dashed in pieces at the head of every street; for her honored men lots were cast, and all her great men were bound in chains. 11 You also will be drunken; you will go into hiding; you will seek a refuge from the enemy. 12 All your fortresses are like fig trees with first-ripe figs — if shaken they fall into the mouth of the eater. 13 Behold, your troops are women in your midst. The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies; fire has devoured your bars. 14 Draw water for the siege; strengthen your forts; go into the clay; tread the mortar; take hold of the brick mold! 15 There will the fire devour you; the sword will cut you off. It will devour you like the locust. Multiply yourselves like the locust; multiply like the grasshopper! 16 You increased your merchants more than the stars of the heavens. The locust spreads its wings and flies away. 17 Your princes are like grasshoppers, your scribes like clouds of locusts settling on the fences in a day of cold — when the sun rises, they fly away; no one knows where they are. 18 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?*