

Dress For Battle, For the Lord is Restoring the Majesty of His People

Nahum 2:1-5 (ESV)

Notes

¹The scatterer has come up against you. Man the ramparts; watch the road; dress for battle; collect all your strength.

²For the Lord is restoring the majesty of Jacob as the majesty of Israel, for plunderers have plundered them and ruined their branches.

³The 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.

⁴The chariots race madly through the streets; they rush to and fro through the squares; they gleam like torches; they dart like lightning.

⁵He remembers his officers; they stumble as they go, they hasten to the wall; the siege tower is set up.

God's Taunting Warning of Judgment (v1)

v1 Yahweh announces the judgment that will soon "scatter" the glory of Nineveh to nothing & challenges them to battle.

- There is *terrifying certainty* in God's opening declaration of judgment. (Modern Equiv.: Saying, "You're a dead man" to a living man)
- Although *these events had not yet occurred*, they are *stated in the PAST TENSE as completed realities* as if to say: **"There is not even the faintest hope of escape from my wrath against you. B/c you have willfully chosen to love your sin, to spurn my laws, to reject me as your Maker & Lord, & to devote yourself to your own wicked desires, the door of mercy is now sealed shut forever. The hand of my grace is withdrawn. I, the Lord Almighty, am coming to destroy you."**
- This dreadful announcement from God is *further intensified by the MOCKING TONE of God* in the second half of v1.
- In these words God is saying: **"Bring out all your 'manly' soldiers in defense. Set sentries to 'watch' all 'the roads' into Nineveh. Get your army 'dressed for battle' with every weapon in the armory. 'Collect all your strength'. NONE OF IT WILL BE SUFFICIENT FOR YOUR RESCUE. For your enemy is NOT flesh and blood that you may strike with a sword. Your enemy is NOT illness or injury that you may heal with medicine. Your enemy is NOT poverty or famine that you might overcome by wealth or ingenuity. Your enemy is none other than the Almighty God. It is I whom you have set yourself against. It is the holy Judge of all who knows the secrets of every man's heart to whom you must now answer for your life of sin."**

God's Redemptive Purpose For Judgment (v2)

v2 For a long time God's people have been "plundered" and stripped bare like the "branches" of a fruit tree in harvest.

- Through many abuses and persecutions, the Assyrians have made life hard for God's people.
- For centuries they have *robbed Israel of strength, promoted idolatry rather than devotion to Yahweh, plundered their harvests, murdered their families, enslaved their children, molested their women, and caused perpetual fear & anxiety.*

But those days are now over. The time has come for Yahweh to arise like a Warrior & "restore the majesty" of his people.

- Such a message from God should bring *deepest comfort* to those who find shelter in the shadow of his wings. (Ps. 91)
- Moreover, while our historical situation is certainly not identical to that of these Israelites, *this announcement looks forward to the Final Judgment when "restoration" will also be granted to us through the fierce judgment of God.*

Objection: How can God's fiery judgment of death be reason for praise? How can judgment bring about "restoration"?

- **Illustration:** Are you thankful for *antibiotics* when you are sick? Do you know what an antibiotic does to your body?
- It brings *death* to the bad things happening in your body so that you might *overcome* that sickness and be *healed*.
- *Through death*, the medicine brings *life* and **"restoration"** to your sick & ailing body. **God does the same for his people.**
- **Or consider other illustrations such as: Weeding a Garden** (Matt. 13:24-30) **or Pruning a Fruit Tree** (John 15:2; Rom. 11:17-22).
- In one sense, weeding a garden is a *judgment of death* upon all those weeds. They are ripped up from the ground in such a way as to keep them from ever growing again. Yet, why is this done?
- **It is done in order to nurture the thriving of the fruitful plants in which the Gardener delights (i.e. Christ's Church).**
- **Let me ask you:** Is this not the very picture which Jesus Christ himself used in *The Parable of the Weeds*? (Matt. 13:24-30)

Beloved, at present the Church often finds herself suffering under the weight of many evils.

- We are bombarded by *temptations*. We are afraid of *persecutions* (II Tim. 3:12). We are infiltrated by *imposters and false teachers*. We are *oppressed and opposed* by the Devil and those who have been captured to do his will. (II Tim. 2:26)
- In this present life we are still liable to all the miseries of this fallen world, including *sickness, sorrow, tragedy, & death*.
- These things are part *the normal Christian life*. Following Christ means *bearing your cross in his service daily*. (Mt. 10:34-39)
- **But in the great day of God's fierce judgment against all evildoers & against all causes of sin and temptation** (Matt. 13:41), **every oppressor of God's people will be thrown down forevermore—never to rise again.** (Read Revelation 7:13-17)*
- In that most *solemn, dreadful*, & yet *joyful* day, God's people will *shine like the sun* (Matt. 13:43) & *enter into the joy of their Master* as they are given eternal citizenship in the New Heaven & New Earth *where righteousness dwells*. (II Pt. 3:13)
- The fierce judgment of God shall either be **your everlasting damnation** or **your everlasting deliverance**. (Jer. 20:11)

Three Illustrations of Judgment (v3-12)

Concerning this fearful divine judgment, God gives three sobering illustrations in the remainder of Nahum 2, (v3-13).

I. God's Judgment Is Like A Mighty Army Furiously & Unstoppably Charging Ahead (Read v3-5)

- **v3** describes a roar of **"red"** bloodstained soldiers marching against the inhabitants of Nineveh. (i.e. against wicked unbelievers)
- **v4** describes the **"lightning"** speed of their mighty chariots **"madly"** trampling over the wicked, bringing devastation.
- **v5** describes the weak knees (v10) of the trembling army of Nineveh **"stumbling"** over themselves from panic as they see the **"siege towers"** of their enemies pouring soldiers over the wall they trusted for their defense. They are overrun.
- God is using this vivid military imagery to prophetically describe the judgment he would soon enact upon his enemies.
- It is also *foreshadows the Final Judgment* which will soon take place at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Revelation 19)

| Nahum 2:6-13 (ESV) | Notes |
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| <p>⁶ The river gates are opened; the palace melts away;</p> <p>⁷ its mistress is stripped; she is carried off, her slave girls lamenting, moaning like doves and beating their breasts.</p> <p>⁸ Nineveh is like a pool whose waters run away. "Halt! Halt!" they cry, but none turns back.</p> <p>⁹ Plunder the silver, plunder the gold! There is no end of the treasure or of the wealth of all precious things.</p> <p>¹⁰ Desolate! Desolation and ruin! Hearts melt and knees tremble; anguish is in all loins; all faces grow pale!</p> <p>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?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | <p>II. Nineveh's Devastation Is Like A Pool Whose Walls Are Breached & Whose Streams All Flow Away To Nothing (Read v6-9)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> v6-9 use the illustration of a "pool" being ruptured so that all the "water runs away" to describe the coming judgment. The "water" in this "pool" refers to all the "wealth" and "treasures" which these rebellious people have accumulated. In defiance of God their Maker, they have made idols out of wealth, pleasure, & indulgence—putting these before God. They have accumulated great quantities of the earth's delights through their worldly lusts and evil endeavors. But all the "silver", "gold", & "precious things" they obtained through wickedness shall be "plundered" in a moment. They will cry, "Halt! Halt!" But it will NOT "turn back." B/c when the day of God's judgment comes, no earthly treasures shall be retained. Everything the wicked devote themselves to will be utterly lost in the end. They will keep none of it. Not only will they find they have wasted their life accumulating wealth which they cannot keep, but they will have the double-sorrow of recognizing that by making idols of wealth & pleasure they have made themselves enemies of God. <p>So it will be for all unbelievers at the Final Judgment. You may be rich, beautiful, successful, etc. in this life. But a life lived in opposition to God is like a pool whose walls are pierced & whose streams all flow away to nothing in the end.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All who love the things of this world and spend their lives idolatrously pursuing money, pleasure, leisure, comfort, and indulgence over-against humble obedience & submission to God shall meet the same sorrowful end. (Ps. 73:16-17; Jm. 5:1-6) Therefore, I urge you in love: Take care dear brothers and sisters that you be not deceived together with the wicked & that you be not swept away in the judgment by becoming drunk with indulgence in our luxurious American society. Our reward is in heaven. Now is NOT the time for fattening ourselves w/ delights, but for faithfully serving our King! (I Jn. 2:15) <p>III. Assyria, the Mighty "Lion" Who Made "Prey" of the Nations, Will No Longer Devour But Be "Devoured" (Read v10-13)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assyria had been the dominant power over the nations for some time. God depicts this reality w/ the image of a "lion". Like a mighty "lion" Assyria exercised terrible cruelty & force in making "prey" of others for their own satisfaction. These things are depicted through the vivid descriptions of "strangling prey" in order to "fill their caves" w/ riches. (v12) Moreover, as the capital city of Assyria, "Nineveh" had been the "the lion's den". That is, Nineveh was the place where successive generations of wicked "young lions" were "fed" or nurtured in order to perpetuate their wicked empire. For years, the strength of the "lion" of Assyria was too great for Israel to overcome. The best they could do was submit as a vassal state who purchased protection from Assyria's violence by paying exorbitant "tribute" in money & crops. (v2) <p>But in v13 Yahweh declares that the might of this "lion" who oppressed & mistreated his people is about to be CRUSHED.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The "lion" of Assyria shall now face "the Lion of Judah"—the Lord Jesus Christ, who, with a robe dipped in blood (like the "soldiers" described in v3), will conquer all the enemies of his people with "the sword of his mouth". (Read Revelation 19:11-16)* The great hunter Assyria, is now the hunted of the Lord. The eater of "prey" shall now be "devoured...from the earth." <p style="text-align: center;">God Himself Shall Inflict the Judgment (v13)</p> <p>Note the repetition of the first person in v13: "I am against you..." "I will burn your chariots..." I will cut off..."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> God himself is the dread warrior whom unbelievers must face (Jer. 20:11). God is the one who brandishes the sword of eternal wrath. God is the one whose vengeance shall not be quenched, whose verdict is final and beyond all appeal. Someone will say, "But that is not the way of Jesus Christ!" But, my dear one, it is! Have you not read Revelation 14:10? There we are told that those who have turned from God to love the world shall, "drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger," and that such persons, "will be tormented w/ fire in the presence of the Lamb." The Devil is NOT the one stoking the fires of Hell. God is. Jesus is the one who punishes the wicked. He is their Judge. <p>This is the future of every person who refuses to humble themselves by repentance and to place their faith in Christ.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why? Because by their sin & unrepentance, such people have made themselves the enemies of God. They have chosen death rather than life. They have refused his mercy, spurned his authority, & hardened their hearts unto everlasting ruin. But this does not have to be your future! What does God ALSO say in his Word? He says, "Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest," (Matt. 11:28). He says, "All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved," (Rm. 10:13). Therefore, I urge you as a servant of Christ Jesus & minister of his gospel called and sent by the Holy Spirit: Turn & live! Flee from sin to Christ! Escape the wrath to come! (I Thess. 1:10) There is salvation no other name but Christ alone! (Acts 4:12) If this God is your Father by saving faith in his Son, then he shall be your everlasting Defender, Keeper, & Savior. (Jn 10:28) But if you choose rebellion, cherishing sin over Christ, all the strength of this God shall be your everlasting ruin. (Rm. 11:22) |

Reflection Question:

Which is true for you? Is the Lord your everlasting Defender & Savior? Or is he your everlasting ruin? Turn to Christ and live!

