

The “*Good Tidings*” of Nineveh’s Doom

Nahum 1:1-14

Pastor Michael Lynn / West Hampden Baptist Church

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Introduction: Picture an excited messenger running up and down the hills, hurriedly making his way to Jerusalem. From afar he lifts up the glad shout, “Nineveh is fallen, Nineveh is fallen.” As the messenger is surrounded by the anxious crowd, he pants out an exhortation for them to resume the observance of the feasts and festivals, encouraging them to spread the word far and near that they need not fear Assyrian oppression anymore. Such is the picture Nahum brings to the mind in 1:15, “*Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.*” The words recorded here are in the past tense (prophetic perfect?), indicating that though Judah still groans under the ruling authority of Assyria, the end and removal of that oppressor is as good as done. Such “*good tidings*,” yet to be fulfilled, could even now bring comfort to Judah, as they hear this “*burden*” leveled against Nineveh being first read to them before being sent to Nineveh. It must be noted that Nahum completes the story begun by a previous prophet named Jonah some 100 years earlier. Jonah’s message, “*Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,*” was heeded by the cruel and hated Assyrians, leading to a city-wide (and nation-wide?) revival. The city was spared because of Jonah’s God who is “*...a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil*” (Jonah 4:2). Now nearly 100 years later, it is learned that Nineveh has returned to her old ways. Apparently the repentant faith of the Ninevites in Jonah’s day was not transmitted to their children. The atrocities and cruelty of the nation of Assyria has manifested itself to an even greater degree than before. Nineveh now stands ripe for judgment. Nahum’s message of Nineveh’s ultimate doom is the result of God’s majestic person and His manifested power. Consider in these three chapters: Nineveh’s doom exclaimed (1:1-14), explained (1:15-2:13), & expected (3:1-19). In this first chapter note God’s attributes declared & His attitude described.

I. Nineveh’s doom **exclaimed** (1:1-14)

A. God’s attributes **declared** (:1-9).

1. God is **jealous** as well as **just** (:2).

a. Jealousy identified and illustrated:

- (1) “*Jealous*” - “requiring exclusive loyalty” > the Lord’s fervent commitment to His people for their protection & His exclusive claim to obedience by His people for their good.
- (2) Because God is a jealous God, demanding exclusive loyalty & devotion, He is also a wrathful God - consider the parallel between marriage & God’s relationship to His people.

b. Justice examined [“*furious*” - “full of wrath,” literally, “a baal of wrath” - His wrath mastered]:

- (1) “*Revengeth*” (avenging) - occurs three times in verse 2 (once as “*will take vengeance*) - not in the sense of our taking vengeance, but rather the execution of God’s justice predicated upon His holy character.
- (2) The appropriate amount of punishment is awarded; no more, no less.

2. God is **longsuffering** yet also **powerful** (:3-6, 8).

a. Definition of His longsuffering (:2).

- (1) “Slow to anger” [“long of nose”? - idiom, “The Lord has a long nose,” meaning it takes time for His nose to become red (with anger).
- (2) God is slow to anger but it is not because He is powerless.

- b. Demonstration of His power (:3-6, 8).
 - (1) In whirlwind and storms - all under His control.
 - (2) Clouds - God stirring up the clouds as a warrior would stir up the dust.
 - (3) Waters - dries up the sea (Red Sea, Ex. 14:15-25; Ps. 106:9); dries up the rivers (Josh. 3)
 - (4) Land's fertility - lushness of Bashan's pastures; fruitfulness of Carmel's vineyards, stateliness of Lebanon's cedars - all wither before God's infinite strength.
 - (5) Mountains - see Jud. 5:4; Hab. 3:6; Mic. 1:3-4; Amos 9:5 (divine power).
 - (6) Summary - two rhetorical questions - no one can stand before God's indignation or abide in the presence of His wrath.
 - (7) "Flood" (:8) - flood waters destroyed the walls allowing the enemy entrance; "darkness" - representing defeat and destruction (see also 2:6, 8).
- 3. God is **good** and therefore **trustworthy** (:7).
 - a. His goodness:
 - (1) Pictures > God is faithful & trustworthy; demonstrated in His mercy.
 - (2) Provides > a "strong hold" - a mighty fortress (cf. Ps. 46:1); place of safety.
 - b. His knowledge:
 - (1) He "knoweth" > God desires a personal relationship with his people; they are to know Him as they are reminded that He knows all about them.
 - (2) Their "trust" > trusting in His forgiveness, His love, and His promises.
- B. God's attitude described (:9-14).
 - 1. His **contempt** toward Assyria (:9a, 10, 12a).
 - a. Defying Assyria's arrogance (:9a).
 - (1) He is "plotting" ("*imagineth*") against the Lord - cf. Ps. 2:1 & see II Kgs. 18.
 - (2) Nahum's proposal: "Do you think you can stand up against such a God as this?"
 - b. Declaring Assyria's annihilation (:9b, 10, 12a).

["*Thus saith the Lord*" used only here in Nahum - He is God's mouthpiece.]

 - (1) Complete destruction:
 - (a) "*Affliction shall not rise up the second time*" (:9).
 - (b) Though "*quiet*" (:12) - fully supplied and numerous, they will be cut down.
 - (2) Compared description:
 - (a) "*Drunkards*" - physically? celebrating previous victories or to embolden? or spiritually? Drinking from the cup of God's wrath?
 - (b) "*Stubble fully dry*" - ready to be consumed by fire.
 - 2. His **compassion** for Judah (:12b-13).
 - a. Promise of Assyria's defeat (cf. :9b):
 - (1) Not to be afflicted again by Assyria.
 - (2) Not prohibiting affliction from another source later (Babylon).
 - b. Promise of Judah's deliverance:
 - (1) "*Break his yoke from off thee*" - imagery of an ox enslaved to its owner.
 - (2) "*Burst thy bonds in sunder*" - cf. Lev. 26:13; Jer. 28:10-14; Isa. 14:25.
 - 3. His **condemnation** of Sennacherib (:14).
 - a. The prediction concerning his dynasty:
 - (1) Extinction of his dynasty - "*no more of thy name shall be sown.*"
 - (2) Destruction of his idolatry - "*cut off the graven image and the molten image.*"
 - b. The place of his death:
 - (1) Where he would die - "*out of the house of thy gods*" - see II Kgs. 19:37.
 - (2) Where he would be buried - "*I will make thy grave*" - certainty of his death.

["*For thou are vile*" - "light" (therefore despised and contemptible) - weighed in the balances and found wanting (see also Dan. 5:27)]

Conclusion: How well do you know God? Are you aware that He is a jealous God, as well as a just God? His fervent love for His people protects them & His exclusive claim to their obedience prospers them. God is longsuffering & yet He is powerful. Though His “patience” with mankind is oft times used to accuse Him of not keeping His promises, His longsuffering allows time for men to repent (II Peter 3:9). There is a limit to His longsuffering, as demonstrated in His judgment of the Assyrians. The God of the Bible is also good, & therefore trustworthy. He who knows all about His creatures desires a relationship with His people. A proper awareness of who God is leads one to see the audacity of those who dare stand against Him (cf. Psalm 2:1-5). The study of Nahum makes clear the majestic person of God & the manifested power of God. Do you know Him personally? Can you say with the Psalmist, *“For the Lord God is a sun & shield: the Lord will give grace & glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk up-rightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee”* (Psalm 84:11-12)? Do you know that He is good? Is He your stronghold in the day of trouble?