

Pastor Grady Covin
The Mission
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Nahum Chapter 3

So tonight with the Lord's help I'm planning to finish up our study in the Book of Nahum. And to do that we're going to be looking at chapter 3 which is also the last chapter. And tonight Nahum is going to tell us **why** God will judge Nineveh.

Last week we learned how God would judge the great city of Nineveh and the Assyrian nation. And in great detail, Nahum painted a picture for us of how all that would go down. And we know from history that he was right, because it came true just exactly like he predicted.

And tonight we're going to see more of the same as Nahum tells us why God is going to execute this judgment. Let me just read through the chapter and then we'll go back and look at it a few verses at a time.

Nahum 3:1, Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs.

2 The noise of a whip And the noise of rattling wheels, Of galloping horses, Of clattering chariots!

3 Horsemen charge with bright sword and glittering spear. There is a multitude of slain, A great number of bodies, Countless corpses— They stumble over the corpses—

4 Because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, The mistress of sorceries, Who sells nations through her harlotries, And families through her sorceries.

5 “Behold, I am against you,” says the Lord of hosts; “I will lift your skirts over your face, I will show the nations your nakedness, And the kingdoms your shame.

6 I will cast abominable filth upon you, Make you vile, And make you a spectacle.

7 It shall come to pass that all who look upon you Will flee from you, and say, ‘Nineveh is laid waste! Who will bemoan her?’ Where shall I seek comforters for you?”

8 Are you better than No Amon That was situated by the River, That had the waters around her, Whose rampart was the sea, Whose wall was the sea?

9 Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, And it was boundless; Put and Lubim were your helpers.

10 Yet she was carried away, She went into captivity; Her young children also were dashed to pieces At the head of every street; They cast lots for her honorable men, And all her great men were bound in chains.

11 You also will be drunk; You will be hidden; You also will seek refuge from the enemy.

12 All your strongholds are fig trees with ripened figs: If they are shaken, They fall into the mouth of the eater.

13 Surely, your people in your midst are women! The gates of your land are wide open for your enemies; Fire shall devour the bars of your gates.

14 Draw your water for the siege! Fortify your strongholds! Go into the clay and tread the mortar! Make strong the brick kiln!

15 There the fire will devour you, The sword will cut you off; It will eat you up like a locust. Make yourself many—like the locust! Make yourself many—like the swarming locusts!

16 You have multiplied your merchants more than the stars of heaven. The locust plunders and flies away.

**17 Your commanders are like swarming locusts,
And your generals like great grasshoppers, Which camp
in the hedges on a cold day; When the sun rises they flee
away, And the place where they are is not known.**

**18 Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; Your
nobles rest in the dust. Your people are scattered on the
mountains, And no one gathers them.**

**19 Your injury has no healing, Your wound is severe.
All who hear news of you Will clap their hands over you,
For upon whom has not your wickedness passed
continually?**

Like I told you before, our God is a long-suffering and patient God, but like I also told you last time, there's a line you don't want to cross. And if a person or a nation continues in their sin and continues to ignore their invitation from God to repent, then there will eventually come a time when God's hand of judgment will fall.

And the people of Nineveh and the leaders of Assyria have already crossed that line. They were given a chance to repent and many did repent, and many were saved when Jonah went there to preach. But that was some fifty or sixty years ago and many of those people have died and the ones that are left are obviously outnumbered, and the nation as a whole has turned back to their evil

ways, and back to their idols and so God has pronounced judgement on them.

And last week in chapter 2 we learned **how** God was going to judge them. We were given the details of how they would be judged and it wasn't pretty.

In fact, God gave them a dose of their own medicine as many of them were slaughtered and taken captive in much the same way as they had slaughtered and taken captive other nations, including the nation of Israel.

And all throughout the Bible we have references to how God will eventually judge the wicked and how He will take vengeance on those who have persecuted and done wrong to His children. And so if people think they can treat God's people with disrespect and with pain and suffering, well, they're right; they can. But they need to also remember that the pain and suffering they cause others will be meted out to them to the same or even greater degree when God comes back to judge the wicked.

And so in this last chapter Nahum is going to give us three reasons as to **why** Nineveh deserved to be judged.

And the first reason we're going to learn in verses 1-3.

Nahum 3:1, Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs.

2 The noise of a whip And the noise of rattling wheels, Of galloping horses, Of clattering chariots!

3 Horsemen charge with bright sword and glittering spear. There is a multitude of slain, A great number of bodies, Countless corpses—They stumble over the corpses—

The Assyrians were known to be very clever diplomats when it came to dealing with other nations, but they were also known to be liars. They would constantly make promises they wouldn't keep and they would in time break their promises and they would eventually turn against and destroy those who they had lied to.

And this is no doubt a pattern that Satan uses through people and nations; and a pattern we know from prophecy that he will use in the end times with respect to the nation of Israel.

When the tribulation period first begins, after the church is taken away, the antichrist is going to come on the scene and at first he's going to appear to be the savior of the world. And he's going to make a peace treaty of sorts with Israel and appear to be their friend, but then after 3-1/2 years, around half way through the seven year tribulation period, he's going to turn against Israel.

And that's the pattern that Satan has always used and still uses today. He's a liar and a deceiver and he's a murderer. And we

need to be wise and be aware of who he is and what he does and how he operates.

Now, when I say they destroyed the people who they lied to, that was an understatement. Like we learned in the past, they were ruthless in the way they took over nations. They would literally slaughter people without any regard for age or sex, and then they would stack up their corpses like firewood and display their bodies as a warning sign to anybody else who might oppose them.

Sometimes, they would maim them by gouging out their eyes or cutting off their limbs. Sometimes they would filet them like a fish; cut off their skin and then wallpaper the walls of the city with their skins. Sometimes they would bury them in the sand with only their head sticking out and then take a stake and drive it through their tongue and into the ground to hold their mouth open and then just leave them there in the hot sun to go mad before they died. And they would do all these things in plain view of the people to strike fear in the people.

But the shedding of innocent blood is a very serious sin that God will not overlook or ever forget. And it's a sin that we can count on Him to judge just as He does here. And many scriptures like I said, speak to that end.

And so all the depraved dictators throughout history and all those who have caused pain and heartache to come to God's people and to innocent people in general, will one day stand before God; and they will be judged for their sin and their crimes against God and humanity. And they will receive what they have sown and even more, because they will spend eternity in hell receiving their punishment.

As for the Assyrians, these sounds and these rumblings that are described here in these first few verses were sounds that were normally heard by their enemies when they would attack them. But here those same sounds are being heard by the Assyrians. The sound of the whip and the sound of chariots racing through the city, they're hearing these sounds now in their own city because they're being attacked just like they attacked others. And so now it's the Assyrians who have this great sense of fear and dread. And so God has turned the tables and He's just giving them what they've given so many others in the past.

And then the second reason they were judged is because of their idolatry. And that's in verses 4–7.

4 Because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, The mistress of sorceries, Who sells nations through her harlotries, And families through her sorceries.

**5 “Behold, I am against you,” says the Lord of hosts;
“I will lift your skirts over your face,
I will show the nations your nakedness,
And the kingdoms your shame.**

**6 I will cast abominable filth upon you, Make you vile,
And make you a spectacle.**

**7 It shall come to pass that all who look upon you
Will flee from you, and say, ‘Nineveh is laid waste!
Who will bemoan her?’ Where shall I seek comforters
for you?”**

Many times in Scripture, idolatry is associated with prostitution, or vice versa and when you consider that the chief deity of Nineveh was Ishtar, who was the goddess of sexual passion, and fertility, and war, then you can understand why Nahum used this metaphor.

I was because of their worship of this god and because of their spiritual blindness, that the Assyrians were captivated by this evil goddess and as a result they were under the control of lust, greed, and violence.

And the truth is, people naturally become like the god that they worship.

**Psalm 115:8, Those who make them are like them;
So is everyone who trusts in them.**

And so who or what we worship and what we believe as a result of our worship determines how we behave. If we trust in the true and living God, then as we worship Him and as we study and meditate and learn God's word, our minds are transformed along with our hearts and eventually our actions. And the goal is to become more and more like Christ.

But if we worship the things of this world, whether it be money or power or sex or whatever, we'll become like the things we worship.

And not only will we be that way, but those over whom we have influence will be that way. And that's another reason the Assyrians were so evil and dangerous in the eyes of God, because not only did they practice all these evil things, they also spread this evil influence to other nations and they enslaved them as well by their sorcery.

And by the way, this exactly what will happen in the end times when the Mystery Babylon will reappear during the last days. And we studied that in our study of Revelation in chapters 17-18. That's, if you'll remember, when Satan and the beast and antichrist will develop a one world false religious system and government.

Now, in ancient times, prostitutes were often shamed by being publicly exposed, and so this is what God has promised to do to

Nineveh. God will in essence expose Assyria's nakedness before all the nations, and this would of course be the end of their evil influence. And this great city, this magnificent wealthy city would become a heap of ruins.

And then the third and final reason God is going to judge Assyria is because of their pride and self-confidence.

And that's going to be in verses 8–19.

8 Are you better than No Amon That was situated by the River, That had the waters around her, Whose rampart was the sea, Whose wall was the sea?

9 Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, And it was boundless; Put and Lubim were your helpers.

10 Yet she was carried away, She went into captivity; Her young children also were dashed to pieces At the head of every street; They cast lots for her honorable men, And all her great men were bound in chains.

11 You also will be drunk; You will be hidden; You also will seek refuge from the enemy.

12 All your strongholds are fig trees with ripened figs: If they are shaken, They fall into the mouth of the eater.

13 Surely, your people in your midst are women! The gates of your land are wide open for your enemies; Fire shall devour the bars of your gates.

14 Draw your water for the siege! Fortify your strongholds! Go into the clay and tread the mortar! Make strong the brick kiln!

15 There the fire will devour you, The sword will cut you off; It will eat you up like a locust. Make yourself many—like the locust! Make yourself many—like the swarming locusts!

16 You have multiplied your merchants more than the stars of heaven. The locust plunders and flies away.

17 Your commanders are like swarming locusts, And your generals like great grasshoppers, Which camp in the hedges on a cold day; When the sun rises they flee away, And the place where they are is not known.

18 Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; Your nobles rest in the dust. Your people are scattered on the mountains, And no one gathers them.

19 Your injury has no healing, Your wound is severe. All who hear news of you Will clap their hands over you, For upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?

The Assyrians were like most prideful and wicked people in the world in that they never thought they would face judgement. People who are prideful are also foolish and they think that

somehow God's just going to ignore their sin and or maybe just forget about it. The Psalmist describes that person in

Psalm 10:11, He has said in his heart, “God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see.”

The foolish proud man really thinks that he can somehow escape the hand of God. And because God is a patient God and because He doesn't act immediately, well, that just adds to their confidence that they're going to get away with their sin.

2 Peter 3:4, describes how the fool thinks. He says, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”

Because God hasn't acted immediately, they really believe they're going to get away with it. But God's patience should not be taken as a sign of His weakness or inattention. God's word assures us that there will come a time of reckoning.

And so Peter goes on to say this in verse

5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, 6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. 7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the

same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

The Assyrians believed like those during Noah's day. They didn't believe that judgement would come. But just like when the floods came and the door to the ark was closed, the Assyrians found out different. And every sinner who refuses to repent, they too will find out that God is true to His word. And though he is long-suffering and kind and loving, He is also a God of justice and judgment.

And so in this closing paragraph, Nahum uses a number of images to show the Assyrians their weaknesses and to assure them of their ultimate defeat.

And he begins with a fact of history: He begins with the defeat of the Egyptian city of Thebes, or No-Ammon, which was destroyed by the Assyrians in 663 BC. This was the capital city of Upper Egypt and it too was like the city of Nineveh in that they were sure that they were safe from their enemies. They didn't believe they could be invaded until it happened and so in their pride, they were defeated by the Assyrians.

And just like Nineveh, Thebes was situated by waters which were supposed to be their defense, but the city fell just the same. Thebes also had many allies, but even they couldn't protect her.

And so what Assyria did to the people of Thebes would in turn be done to them. Their children would be dashed to pieces, the leaders would become slaves, and the people would become exiles.

And so Nahum says, if this happened to Thebes, then why couldn't it happen to Nineveh? And of course it did happen and their pride and their self-confidence couldn't save them. The Medes and Babylonians captured their city and Nineveh would be made to drink the same cup of God's wrath that they had meted out to others in the past.

And the battle was so easy that in verse 12 Nahum describes it like ripe figs dropping into a person's mouth.

And then in verses 13-14 it says that those one time ferocious Assyrian soldiers would be drained of their strength and be like women: weak, and afraid, and unable to meet the enemy. They wouldn't be able to bar the gates, or stop the enemy from setting fire to them, nor would they be able to repair the walls or carry water to put out the fires.

And then the next image in verses 15-17 is that of insects, which depict the Babylonian soldiers sweeping through the land and the city like a swarm of grasshoppers or locusts and wiping out everything in their path and also plundering all the treasures they could find.

But the Assyrian leaders on the other hand, were like locusts or grasshoppers that go to sleep on the wall on a cold day, and when the sun comes up, and they feel the heat and fly away. The king and the leaders of Assyria had been so prideful and so overconfident, they were like these locusts sleeping on the wall, but when the invasion occurred, they all flew off to a safe place!

And so Assyria would become like a scattered flock with sleeping shepherds, that's verse 18, or like a wounded body with no way to be healed, verse 19. And they would have no allies to rescue them. In fact, all the other nations would rejoice when they heard that the Assyrian Empire was no more.

And so just like the Book of Jonah, the Book of Nahum ends with a question: which is also a reminder of why they were being judged.

For upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually? The NIV says, “for who has not felt your endless cruelty?”