

Nahum 1:1-8

What happens when a people, a gentile nation, having received the illumination of Who God Is and their relation to Him, who have walked with Him for a season, turn their backs on His goodness and kindness and grace? Well, the oracle that Nahum prophesied is of the utter and irrevocable destruction of a great city and a great gentile people. Nahum wrote as prophecy, but what he predicted we now see in the rear-view-mirror of history. Nahum lived when Assyria was threatening Judah's very existence. The prophet predicted that God would destroy the proud and cruel capital of the Assyrian Empire: Nineveh. They ruled cruelly and totally over a vast empire that at this time stretched from Egypt in the west to Persia in the east. The city wall was eight miles long and 50 feet thick holding a population of some 600,000!

Yet their fall was astounding! This prophecy of Nahum's was fulfilled within a few decades, in 612BC, by the Babylonian Medes. So total was Nineveh's destruction that for centuries travelers passed over its ruins without even knowing that this mighty and terrible city lay buried beneath their feet. Only in fairly modern times (1842 so 2,455 years later) did archaeologists unearth and examine its ruins. Such was the literal and complete fulfillment of Nahum's prophecy.

There are two books in the Bible about gentile Nineveh: Jonah and Nahum. The book of Jonah, (780-760BC) reveals God's love and mercy in action to the repentant Ninevites, and the book of Nahum (663-654BC) reveals the perfect holiness of God expressed in unquenchable anger and vengeance for those who forget His love and mercy. The one complements and mirrors the other. A key point of spiritual history is that, "God has no grandchildren!" That is, no one is right with God just because their parents or grandparents were. Each generation must seize the grace and mercy of God in true humility, for themselves!

Nahum is among the books of the Bible least liked and most attacked by "liberal Christians" and "liberal religious scholars/critics" and is rather unpopular among many evangelicals today, and for the obvious reason that it reveals God's holy response to aggressive, nationalized as well as culturalized personal wickedness: Destruction of God's enemies. As believers we should hold it near and dear for the very same reasons. Our God is holy and good, and evil has a final end! In fact, the souls of the saints beheaded during the coming Great Tribulation will cry out, "'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who live on the earth?" Rev 6:10. What the Book of Revelation will be to the whole wicked world held captive under God's angry judgments, Nahum was to a particular nation, Assyria. So to see the final future of our ungrateful world, look to the past! Take the warning! Now is the day of salvation! We only have the present. Carpe Diem – Seize the day in the time of salvation while we may!

V1:1 We know little about Nahum personally, except the town in Judah where he was from (Elkosh), which may later have been known as Capernaum. So he wrote from Judah. We also know from this book that he was far and away the supreme poet of the prophets! Context: Nahum and Zephaniah prophesied after Isaiah and Michah. Isaiah prophesied between about 740-680 B.C. Nahum may have prophesied from about 660-650 B.C. Zephaniah probably prophesied between 640 and 612 B.C. Jonah, Hosea (both from Israel, not Judah), and Amos, Isaiah, and Micah (from Judah) were all **8th-century B.C. prophets**. Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah were all **7th-century B.C. prophets**.

Vv2-8 exposit the attributes of the great majesty of Yahweh!

V2, *Jealousy in essence is an intolerance of rivals*. In God it describes His attitude to those who pretend to be Him or who set up rivals for the allegiance and affection that is due Him alone. In a fallen human, jealousy can be either good or a terrible sin. In God it is part of his terrifying beauty, as it would be sinful if He were not intolerant of His rivals! To be God's child is to be protected by His beautiful jealousy, as looking upon Him as He is is the greatest of blessings and illumination and life! To look upon another or oneself in that way would be corrosive to our own happiness and good. So God jealously guards our affections and aims us towards His loving face for our own good.

Here, Yahweh (the LORD) is defined as an Elohim (a Deity) that suffers no rivals in the form of any other god or pretender to the throne. He alone is sovereign over all lesser sovereigns, and he alone is worthy of ultimate love and obedience and worship, for the good of His creatures. The Assyrians had created, worshipped and served lesser gods, cruel gods, sexual gods, and attacked the character of the good God of all Providence and of true preservation and salvation. This was intolerable and would come to a complete end!

Vengeance in essence is the meting out of judgment and punishment for past wrongs. In God it describes the motion and action of God arising from His anger and judgment toward those who reject goodness and kindness and mercy and grace.

We will come back next Sunday to vv3-6 to stare in awe at this fearful Deity! **But for now, let us turn our attention to v7**, because here is the place of rest and assurance for those who abide in God's love and grace and favor. This is the place for those who do not reject God's goodness and providence, but rather lean on them for solace and comfort.

Here Yahweh is described by Nahum as an impenetrable castle/fortress when enemy forces come to pillage, plunder and destroy.

Look at Romans 12:19 for how v7 is to work its way out through the tissues and marrow of the Christian life to emerge in an attitude for us at present.