

## 1. Background on Nahum's Oracle Against Nineveh

- a. concerning Nineveh
  - i. founded by Nimrod (Gen 10:8-12), the first "mighty man" upon the earth
    1. Nimrod also built Babylon and some other great cities
    2. Interestingly, this "mighty man" built cities that were either founded upon or came to be known as symbols of warfare
      - a. Babylon stood for man in warfare with God (tower of Babel)
      - b. Nineveh stood for man in warfare with man.
    3. Many of the oldest cities in the world founded by this "mighty man", Nimrod
  - ii. 150 years after Jonah
    1. contrast Jonah/Nahum
    2. In Jonah, Nineveh repented and the prophet was disobedient
    3. In Nahum, the prophet was obedient, but Nineveh was disobedient
  - iii. Assyrian powers
    1. Thebes fell in 663BC and Nahum describes it as a past event (3:8)
    2. Nineveh fell in 612BC, so Nahum was written between these times.
    3. During this timeframe, Ashurbanipal II reigned with ferocity
      - a. Reliefs showing atrocities of war committed by his armies
      - b. Enemies flayed alive, captives dragged away with hooks piercing their mouths (2 Chr 33:11, Manasseh was taken captive)
      - c. Forced the Elamites to dig up their ancestors' bones and grind them to dust
      - d. The Assyrians ruled by terror, not mere might, thus they forced captives to walk by these reliefs showing their horrific atrocities as a means of striking fear into their captives
    4. Nahum writes during the strength of Assyria, near the pinnacle of her power
- b. Vision: the wicked city will fall at the hand of the LORD!
  - i. He describes these things in vivid, action-packed, detail
    1. One of the most descriptive and, in such a way, beautiful pieces of poetry in OT
    2. Nahum describes what he saw in this vision:
      - a. "The crack of the whip! Rumble of the wheel! Galloping horse and bounding chariot! Horsemen charging, flashing sword and glittering spear! Multitudes of the slain, piles of corpses, dead bodies with no end – they are stumbling over them!" (Neh 3:2-3)
  - ii. Nahum has a vision of the fall of Nineveh, which he proclaims is from the vengeance of the LORD

## 2. The LORD is Supremely Powerful

- a. Nothing stands in God's way when He moves
  - i. Creation clears the way at His command, from the sea to the mountains, the depths to the heights
  - ii. Nobody can plot against Him and succeed (v9) or stand before His anger (v6)
- b. God is a mighty and vengeful warrior
  - i. Jealous is a word that can easily be misconstrued in English
    1. This is not petty jealousy that acts out of weakness, as if God had his feelings hurt and is going to lash out now
    2. Jealousy, biblically and primarily, is a deep-rooted emotion that moves one to action in order to defend the object of the subject's affection or desire
      - a. When a man is jealous for his wife, it is because something is threatening her and his jealousy moves him to act to protect her

- b. Jealousy always moves towards the enemy in order to defend that which he desires
  - 3. There can be sinful jealousy, but it is not the jealousy that is sinful in itself, but rather the object of the affection, i.e. idols of the heart
    - a. Thus, desiring a neighbor's wealth and being jealous for it is reprimanded in Scripture (Ps 73:3)
    - b. Rachel envied Leah's childbearing and was in despair (Gen 30:1)
  - 4. Thus, God is jealous for His own name and glory above all else, and this is right because he is the most worthy and beautiful and glorious One that exists
    - a. Ezek 39:25
    - b. Ex 20:5 – the root of God's just and holy wrath is His jealousy for His glory
      - i. For us that would be narcissistic, because we are not the most glorious
      - ii. For Him, however, it is proper and right because He is, objectively and truly, the most glorious being
  - 5. What is amazing, however, is that God is jealous for His wayward people, His faithless bride to whom He has betrothed Himself by His own act of sovereign grace and love
    - a. Zech 1:14 and 8:2 – he is exceedingly jealous for Zion
    - b. Here in Nahum, God is jealous and will act to take vengeance because Nineveh has enslaved and abused His desired Bride
- c. Objections to God's Wrath
  - i. "It's not a good thing that God is so wrathful"
    - 1. Do you want to live in an amoral universe?
      - a. What would that mean?
        - i. Should sin be stopped? Is there justice for those of the Killing Fields? Should God care about the presence of evil? Should he do something about it?
        - b. There is real, devastating evil in the world.
    - 2. With the advent of Darwinism (a misunderstanding of Darwin, by the way), people have eliminated the Creator, so that there is no beginning.
    - 3. People also don't like the idea of God as judge, so they eliminated the end as well.
      - a. Yet, we fear death. Why?
      - b. Because we fear judgment after death.
    - 4. Thus we live in a society where there is no beginning and no end and the result is that life is meaningless.
      - a. Sartre: "There is no moral law." "Man is a useless passion." "Life is meaningless." "Hell is other people."
      - b. In defining man's existence as the conclusion of the individual's personal freedom, Sartre wrestled with the fact that this assumption led him to a deep conflict in regards to other people: "respect for others' freedom is an empty word." It leads to individual's "freedom" that is lonely, isolated, frustrated, fearful, and in infinite regress.
  - ii. Many say that this talk is "Old Testament stuff" not fitting the New Testament revelation of God's love in Christ:
    - 1. The words of Jesus:
      - a. parable of the weeds (Matt 13:37ff) - reapers gather the weeds (all causes of sin and law-breakers) to be thrown into the fiery furnace where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth
      - b. John 3:36 – whomever does not trust in the Son remains under the wrath of God

- c. Matt 10:28 – fear the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell
- d.
- 2. Apostles:
  - a. 2 Peter 2-3
    - i. “day of judgement and destruction of the ungodly” (3:7)
  - b. Jude 1
  - c. Rom 2:5-8 – hard and impenitent hearts store up wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed...those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness there will be wrath and fury.
  - d. Revelation 19:11ff – Jesus is pictured as a mighty warrior coming in judgment to make war...to strike down the nations...to tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty...
- iii. Many times we get uncomfortable seeing God pictured as “vengeful”, desiring rather to picture him with a weakened love
  - 1. But the love of God shines its fullest in the light of the truth of His just vengeance against sin
    - a. Think of how great God’s love toward you is in Christ when His wrath and vengeance is a burning wrath and a mighty vengeance
    - b. This love toward you swallows that up, it does not dismiss His vengeance, but it bears it up Himself! That is powerful and electrifying love
    - c. 2 Peter 3:9 – God is “patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”
    - d. 2 Peter 3:10 – “but the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.”
  - iv. We think lowly of God’s vengeance because we think lowly of His holiness and we think too little of the wickedness of sin
    - 1. This is easy to do in our culture of affluence and the affect of Christian influence throughout our history (love your neighbor)
    - 2. This is not so easy in a culture where “might makes right”, in a lawless society of tyranny and terror where your neighbor might take the life of your daughter or your wife with a machete
      - a. It is in these circumstances where the truth that the LORD is an avenging God that brings hope
      - b. This truth also leads Christians to keep from taking up arms against their neighbor in retaliation: vengeance is the LORD’s, not mine!
        - i. If the LORD were not vengeful against such evil, then we would be tempted to take vengeance ourselves, would we not?
        - ii. If the LORD were not vengeful, than the victories of evil today are ultimate victories of evil
        - iii. “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the LORD.’” (Rom 12:19)
- d. God’s Enemies are Always Under His Wrath: Nineveh was a great evil enemy of the LORD!
  - i. Often we are offended by God’s wrath because we think so little of the wickedness of sin that we feel this response of God is unjustified and out of proportion.
    - 1. We must recognize the ugliness and wickedness of evil because we don’t see it clearly
    - 2. We think that big sins are heinous but little sins aren’t a big deal, because we don’t see God as a big deal as He really is

- ii. Nineveh was exceedingly wicked and violent:
  - 1. "their men young and old I took prisoners. Of some I cut off their feet and hands; of others I cut off the ears noses and lips; of the young men's ears I made a heap; of the old men's heads I made a marinet. I exposed their heads as a trophy in front of their city. The male children and the female children I burned in flames; the city I destroyed, and consumed with fire." (Ashur-nasir-pal II, King of Assyria 850'sBC) -Ashurbanipal (reigned during Nahum's oracle) was known for severe cruelty
  - 2. bas reliefs show him reclining in the garden with his queen having lunch while the head of his enemy hangs from the trees; he is depicted as threading a dog chain through the jaw of an enemy king and exhibiting him in the street in a cage
- iii. God's enemies
  - 1. Eph 2:1-10 – what changed was not God's attitude towards His enemies, but rather our status from enemy to sons by His grace
    - a. "I'm still wrathful toward my enemies, but you are not any longer an enemy, but I have made you my child! There is no wrath for my children."
  - 2. Rom 5:9-10 – while enemies we were reconciled through Christ's death and we shall be saved (from His wrath) through Christ's life! (note the future salvation from God's wrath and vengeance!)

### 3. The Good News: Jesus is the Liberator from sin, death, and God's wrath

- a. Judgment is real and will be poured out by God upon those who are His enemies.
  - i. Thus, Nahum, and we like him, warn of judgment while proclaiming that hope of liberation from judgment is found only in God.
  - ii. It is precisely our sin in light of God's wrath that is our biggest problem!
- b. Nahum's name means "comfort" or "compassion", for his message is a good word of comfort for Judah in the elimination of Judah's enemies.
  - i. "The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in Him." (v7)
  - ii. Nahum is anticipating the gospel: God the Warrior vanquishing His foes and emancipating His people!
    - 1. Colossians 2:14-15
      - a. disarming the rulers and authorities through His disarmament by the Father
      - b. He triumphed over them in the cross
        - i. Jesus took death's power and death's sting by bearing up the wrath of God in our place
        - ii. Thus, God is both just (he avenges sin against Him) and the justifier (God bears up His vengeance in Christ's death) of those who entrust themselves to Christ
    - iii. If judgment and Hell weren't realities, then the death of Christ was unnecessary and useless, empty, and not merely devoid of meaning, but opposed to it.
- c. The possibility of escaping God's wrath still remains, for today is the day of salvation!
  - i. If one turns to find refuge in Jesus, humbly repudiating his rebellion against the holy God and entrusting Himself to Jesus as His salvation through His death in our place, he will find safe harbor and glory upon glory of God's righteousness.
  - ii. "The last enemy that will be abolished is death" (1 Cor 15:26)
- d. Communion