

Nahum 2 & 3
Yahweh's Opposition to Unceasing Evil

Read Chapter 3

Prayer:

Our holy Father, in the name of your only Son and our Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank you for your holy Word which we have just read. Lord, you inspired Nahum to write these things for our instruction and our growth in the knowledge of you. We need to know more of your ways and your will, we need to give you the glory due to your holy name. Father, teach of your glory today as we study your Word; we ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

We are indebted to the prophet Nahum for showing us that we live in a moral universe. We live in a universe that is not tumbling willy-nilly through time with no purpose and no direction. We live in a universe that is directed and governed by a holy God, a righteous God, a good God.

If this is true, and the Bible affirms that it is true, then you and I have more to be thankful for than we probably realize. We live in a moral universe because it was founded and it is governed by a moral God. What do I mean by a moral God? I cannot say he is a God, as if he were one of several, but I have to simply say God, for there is no other God who rules and reigns except him.

And he is supremely moral, that is, he is perfectly righteous. There is not a hint of evil in him; he is perfectly holy and good and fair. That is not all – he is just and faithful and loving and compassionate. He is so righteous that it is impossible for him to do any evil. Evil and sin are completely against his nature; they are foreign to him. It's as foreign to him as it would be for you or me to breathe water. We could not do it. We can only breathe air.

The fact that God is moral and therefore this universe that he created is a moral universe is a fact so wonderful that we should jump up and down and clap our hands. What this means is that evil and sin will not predominate. Evil and sin will not have the last word. Evil and sin are foreign to this universe and they must and will ultimately be purged out.

Yes, we now live in an evil and sinful world and it often seems as if the forces of evil are in control and are free to oppress and abuse others. And they do go on doing this and nothing seems to stop them. This is true now, but it is not the end of the story. God has a greater plan, a better plan, a most wonderful plan for those who believe in him and in particular those who have trusted in his Son Jesus Christ. We do not now understand and see all that God is doing, but we read his Word and we know he is at work behind the scenes brining about the accomplishment of his holy will.

What is happening in the prophecy of Nahum gives us a foretaste of the final judgment and purging of evil out of God's moral universe. Immorality will not reign; evil will not

triumph – but God, Yahweh God, and his standard of righteousness and morality will triumph and win. Evil and sin will lose. There will be complete victory on God’s behalf.

We studied Nahum chapter 1 two weeks ago and we learned that... Yahweh is a jealous God, he is jealous for his own glory, and he pours out his unrelenting wrath on his enemies.

Yet his wrath against sin and sinners does not cancel the fact that he is good and is a refuge for those who flee to him.

Yahweh will rescue his people and bring good news of restoration to them.

So we learned of God’s fierce judgment on his adversaries but his concern and care for his people.

You see, this was of special concern to the people of Judah because in 722 BC, some 100 years previous, the vicious and powerful Assyrian army – we could call them Ninevites for their capital was Nineveh – had invaded the so-called northern Kingdom of Israel and conquered it – the capital was Samaria – and they had carried off into captivity all the people of the northern 10 tribes of Israel - Asher, Dan, Ephraim, Gad, Issachar, Manasseh, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, and Zebulun. Only Judah and Benjamin escaped and now they feared that they would fall prey to the Assyrians and meet the same fate as their northern neighbors and fellow Hebrews.

But God assured them that this would not happen. We read in Nah. 1:12:

Thus says the Lord,
 “Though they are at full strength and many,
 they will be cut down and pass away.
 Though I have afflicted you,
 I will afflict you no more.

In chapter 2, verse 2, we see that God’s promise to restore his people :

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

The preservation of a remnant was crucial to the survival of the nation and of the keeping of God’s covenant with his people that they would be a blessing to the whole earth and the Messiah, the Seed of a woman, would come forth from this people to bless the world. You see, if even Judah and Benjamin were destroyed and scattered into foreign countries like what had happened to the northern kingdom, then the promise to Abraham and the promise to his descendants would fail to come to pass.

God’s plan to save a people for himself through the suffering, death, and resurrection of the Messiah, the one anointed with the Holy Spirit, would be disrupted and destroyed

and his purposes would fail. So the preservation of a remnant was essential for God's plan to be carried out.

So here is Nahum, prophesying probably sometime between 621 and 612 BC and he is prophesying the downfall and destruction of the fierce and cruel Assyrian Empire, whose capital was Nineveh.

But the days of Nineveh's cruel subjugation of other nations was coming to an end. We read in verse 13 of chapter 2:

¹³ Behold, I am against you, declares the Lord of hosts,...

These are the most fearful words a man or woman or nation could ever hear. If the almighty God, if Yahweh himself is against a person or a nation, that person or that nation is condemned, its end, its destruction is certain. There is no hope- the future is only darkness.

Yahweh indeed pronounced these words against Nineveh and therefore Nineveh was in deep trouble. Nineveh was indeed in danger from the rising power of Babylon and from the Medes but for Yahweh to be against them means that he, the living God, is an enemy of that nation; he will bring down that nation, he will destroy that nation This is where the great, wicked city of Nineveh stood before the living God.

In the midst of this historical situation a prophet of God arose. His name was Nahum, which means 'comfort' or "consolation" and he thundered forth his message from the living God. Nineveh would fall and God would preserve a remnant – there was hope for the future – this was indeed a great comfort for the remaining Hebrew people who were probably wondering if they would survive, if God's promises to Abraham and to them, would be fulfilled.

In Nahum's prophecy there are three key ideas that I want to bring out today. Here is the first point:

I. Yahweh is Opposed to Nineveh's Evil and He Himself is the Standard of Righteousness and Judgment

The Ninevites were condemned by God because they lived contrary to his nature and his character. They worshipped pagan gods who led them into all kinds of idolatry and evil and cruel behavior. They were rebels against God who revealed his existence, his power and glory, everywhere in his creation.

- A. But in the book of Nahum we learn some essential aspects of God's nature, and we saw this last time. We learn that he is jealous – that is, he is zealous for his own glory and honor. He will not share his glory with any false god. In fact, he burns with anger when he sees people worshipping and serving false gods. He is

robbed of the glory that only he is worthy of – and people’s lives become spiritually poverty-stricken.

- B. We learn that Yahweh is angry, avenging, and wrathful against those who persist in living in sin. Yet he is...

Slow to anger

Will no means clear the guilty

Good – 1:7

A refuge -1:7

Will completely destroy his enemies – 1:8

Will restore his people 2:8

He is against evil 2:13 and 3:5

Examples : bloodshed, lies, plundering, seduction/allurement to evil

- II. **Nineveh and the Assyrians were the embodiment of evil** (purveyors of evil)

1:9 – they plotted against Yahweh

1:11 – a particular individual plotted

1:14- they worshipped idols of wood and metal – “you are vile”

2:12 – gained household provision by violence

3:1ff: shedding of blood, lying, plundering

3:4 – whoring, - seduction and allurement to evil; betrays nations

3:19 – their evil was unceasing

For upon whom has not come your unceasing evil?

- III. **Yahweh’s punishment for Nineveh’s evil is thorough and unreserved**

1:6 – graphic descriptions: heat, fire, rocks broken

Who can stand before his indignation?

Who can endure the heat of his anger?

His wrath is poured out like fire,

and the rocks are broken into pieces by him.

2:10 – the emotional toll on a conquered people

Desolate! Desolation and ruin!

Hearts melt and knees tremble;

anguish is in all loins;

all faces grow pale!

3:5-7- extent of her defeat

Behold, I am against you,
 declares the Lord of hosts,
 and will lift up your skirts over your face;
 and I will make nations look at your nakedness
 and kingdoms at your shame.

⁶ I will throw filth at you
 and treat you with contempt
 and make you a spectacle.

⁷ And all who look at you will shrink from you and say,
 "Wasted is Nineveh; who will grieve for her?"
 Where shall I seek comforters for you?

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- II. Nineveh and the Assyrians were the embodiment of evil** (purveyors of evil)
- III. Yahweh's punishment for Nineveh's evil is thorough and unreserved**

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1. We, too, are comforted in the destruction of Nineveh and preservation of the Hebrew remnant.
2. We are extremely grateful that we live in a moral universe because a supremely good and wise and holy God is in control. Evil will be punished and righteousness exalted. Knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth....
3. God's opposition and ultimate destruction of evil confirms that he is indeed good. Because he hated the vile, cruel, wicked sins of Nineveh shows us that these things are contrary to his very nature. They are an attack on his kind and good sovereignty and must be punished most severely.

Yes, there is much evil in the world. There is even much evil in our own hearts. But God stands in opposition to this evil – whether in the world or in our hearts.

When Christ comes he will rid world of all evil and bring in his everlasting reign of righteousness and peace.

And for those who have faith in his Son, who embrace him has their Lord and Savior, their sins have been forgiven and the Holy Spirit continually works in their hearts to conform the more into the image of their Savior.

Nineveh fell to the righteous judgment of God.

God preserved a remnant through which the Messiah came to save his people from their own evil, their own sin.

When Jesus returns this universe will be renovated by fire and all evil and sin will be finally purged. He will raise his people from the dead and we will live with him in a world free from sin and evil, but grounded and permeated only with love and righteousness and holiness, as we worship the Lord Jesus Christ, the warrior from heaven, who will make all this possible.

To the King of righteousness and glory and kindness, the Lord Jesus Christ, be thanks and glory and service forever!