

The God Who Comforts – Part III

A Sermon on Nahum

by

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1. Introduction

2. The incurable wound revealed from the inside and out (3:1-7).

- a. Cursed is the dead city and her inhabitants for their cruelty and idolatry (3:1-4).
 - i. Woe is pronounced on the people of bloodshed, deceit, and pillaging (3:1).
 1. Whenever you see the word “woe” connected to any nation in Scripture, it is never a good thing.
 2. We see precisely why woe is pronounced upon them. They are a people characterized by bloodshed, deceit, and theft.
 - a. If you know anything about their history, you’ll know they were incredibly violent.
 - b. Yet they were also a people Nahum describes as full of lies.
 - c. Finally, they were described as a people full of plundering.
 - d. At the end of verse 1 the prophet simply remarks, “Her prey never departs.”
 - ii. Their dead are as seemingly limitless as the treasures that knew no end (3:2-3).
 1. In a twist of irony, the cruelty and brutality they were known for bringing upon their prey has come swiftly upon them.
 2. This is the inevitable reality of judgment, when it comes. No person is ever prepared for it.

- a. The Ninevites already heard of the wrath to come. The reluctant prophet Jonah came to them and proclaimed a message of doom.
 - b. People do this all the time; people hit rock bottom, straighten up for a bit, and go right back into the mess that made them hit rock bottom to begin with.
 - iii. Her judgment has come upon her for her harlotry and sorceries (3:4).
 - 1. As for Nineveh's judgment, we see in v. 4 that her ruin comes because of her wickedness.
 - 2. Nineveh lured nations many nations into idolatry and even the practice of divination, which is an abomination to the Lord.
 - a. They appealed to the spirit world for power and understanding so they could control their fate and the fate of rival nations, especially at war.
 - b. Nineveh used cultic sexual rituals and witchcraft to seduce people, only to turn around and sell them as slaves.
 - b. The Lord of the heavenly hosts has become their Adversary (3:5-7).
 - i. "Mighty" Assyria will go head to head with the Lord of heavenly armies (3:5a).
 - 1. God proclaims war against Nineveh, just as He did before: "Behold, I am against you."
 - 2. "The Lord of hosts," is a military term signifying God's control over every army of heaven and earth.
 - a. God has raised up the Babylonians and the Medes for this very purpose.

- b. Any time a nation rises or falls, it is due to God’s decree.
 - ii. The nation who shamed her neighbors will be the pinnacle of shame (3:5b-7).
 - 1. The Lord does not simply declare war upon them; His aim is to humiliate the nation in the most degrading way possible.
 - a. The city is compared to a prostitute who will have her skirt lifted her head. Nakedness was a thing of great shame in the ancient world.
 - b. To further add insult to injury, verse six depicts that the Lord will hurl filth on them, make them vile, and set them up on display.
 - 2. Nineveh would meet a swift, brutal, and shameful end—yet there would be none to grieve over her fate.
 - a. All who saw Nineveh’s destruction would shrink back in disgust.
 - b. Yet none would feel remotely sorry for Nineveh. They were a truly brutal, cruel, and wicked people.
- 3. God has been slow to anger, but will by no means clear the guilty (3:8-19).**
- a. The downfall of Thebes was a foretaste of Nineveh’s destruction (3:8-18).
 - i. Just as the strength of Thebes failed, so too will Nineveh’s strength fail (3:8-13).
 - 1. In v. 8 the prophet asks a rhetorical question: are you better than No-amon?
 - a. To give you a brief bit of history: the city of No-amon is also known as the city of Thebes, which was the capital of Egypt.
 - b. You can see this in vv. 8-9. Nahum describes in v. 8 how Thebes had natural defenses built into her surroundings.

- c. Thebes went into exile, slavery, her children were dashed to pieces at the head of every street, and her nobles and warriors were no more.
 2. The point to take from all of this is that the same fate that befell Thebes would come to Assyria, which we now see in v. 11.
 - a. “You too will become drunk; you will be hidden. You too will search for a refuge from the enemy. All your fortifications are fig trees with ripe fruit—when shaken, they fall into the eater’s mouth. Behold, your people are women in your midst! The gates of your land are opened wide to your enemies; fire consumes your gate bars.”
 - b. Like ripe fruit falling from a shaken tree, Nineveh’s strongholds are brought to their foundations.
- ii. Her walls of defense have become a tomb in the hopelessness of judgment (3:14-18).
 1. The prophet commands them to muster all they can to withstand the barrage of attacks coming their way.
 - a. Nahum knows all that they do to protect and defend themselves will be completely in vain. Each command here is undone by the reality that awaits them.
 - b. Then see the final two commands in v. 15; twice they are called to multiply themselves like the locust. This too will fail.
 2. In vv. 16-18 Nahum taunts them yet again—this time, focusing on the futility of putting their trust in their wealth, armies, and rulers.

- a. V. 16; They spent years creating a booming economy.
 - b. V. 17; They spent years raising up mighty warriors who struck fear into the hearts of every man who saw them.
 - c. V. 18; They spent years nurturing leaders who would be found asleep on the job.
 - d. In all of this there is a profound warning found in the things we place our trust in.
- b. The joy of the nations will be found in the justice poured out on the guilty (3:19).
- i. The cancerous wound that is Assyria is only cured in her downfall (3:19a).
 - 1. Read v. 19a: There is no relief for your breakdown, your wound is incurable.
 - 2. Listen to the certainty in that proclamation. There is no relief in your breakdown.
 - ii. Her downfall will be the joy of the nations, who have only experienced their cruelty (3:19b).
 - 1. Much like in the book of Jonah, the prophet Nahum ends with a rhetorical question.
 - a. Read v. 19b: All who hear about you will clap their hands over you, for on whom has not your evil passed continually?
 - b. In other words, "All who hear of your downfall will rejoice, for who has been left untouched and unscathed by your constant evil?"
 - 2. As with the book of Jonah, this question is designed to prompt the reader to think of what it communicates about God.

- a. In Jonah, the rhetorical question ends on a note of hope, which is that God is a God of mercy.
- b. In Nahum, the rhetorical question ends on a note of certainty, which is that God is a God of vengeance.

4. Conclusion: The terrifying reality for those who are not in Christ is that the judgment of God sits on you at this very moment.

- a. The reason Christ came into the world was to save people from the wrath of God.
 - i. John 3 speaks of this reality well, where he demonstrates there are two peoples in the earth; one to judgment and one to eternal life.
 - ii. The many parables of Christ likewise all point to the reality of a coming judgment.
 - 1. The parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13 speaks of two different peoples.
 - 2. The parable of the net, also in Matthew 13, speaks of the kingdom of heaven being like a net that is let down and catches all kinds of fish.
 - 3. In Luke 16 Christ speaks of the rich man and Lazarus.
 - 4. Then of course we have the parable of the sheep and the goats.
 - iii. A great number of other NT texts speak to the coming judgment as well.
 - 1. God has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:31).
 - 2. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and

peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. (Romans 2:9-11).

3. For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. (Romans 14:10-12).

4. And perhaps most vividly, the book of Revelation speaks of the great and terrible wrath on the Day of the Lord.

b. We do not know when the time or the place final judgment will fall, but we do know that it will happen.

i. The truly scary thing for you all to think about is that there is a time before judgment comes where your wound is deemed incurable.

ii. For some of you, you always think you have more time, yet tomorrow is not guaranteed. You are on borrowed time.

c. When God's final judgment is rendered and every person goes to eternal damnation or eternal life, heaven rejoices.

i. That is a tough thing for us to wrap our minds around because it is a very unpleasant thought. Heaven will not weep for the condemned.

ii. Heaven will rejoice because God ultimately proves victorious over all the forces of evil.