

Lessons from Nahum

The spiritual pendulum swung once again in Judah as moral darkness spread throughout the land. Judah strayed from the path of righteousness and the people indulged in idolatrous worship. Judah's leaders yielded to corruption and committed unimaginable sins. Moral decay and spiritual indifference marked the years.

To complicate matters further, the nation of Assyria was growing stronger. This ungodly nation was overthrowing kingdom after kingdom and becoming more and more powerful. They already conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel and now threatened Judah, the Southern Kingdom. A small remnant of Jews in Judah did not follow the practices of King Manasseh. They remained faithful to God, but their hope was fading. They began to wonder if God had forgotten about them.

Amid the darkness, Nahum exemplified unwavering faith and obedience. Chosen by God, this humble prophet conveys a powerful message to the people of Judah. He sought to awaken the hearts of the people to the consequences of their actions, and bring hope to those faithful few.

His message proclaimed the importance of standing firm in the face of adversity and trusting in the Lord's justice. He stressed the importance of maintaining a righteous path even when surrounded by moral decay.

The Rise and Fall of Assyria

Assyria stood as the military power in the Middle East, conquering many nations around them. The impressive buildings and intimidating walls of Nineveh – the capital of Assyria – stood as proof of their immense power. Yet, beneath this pretense of grandeur, spiritual darkness loomed.

Jonah, the reluctant prophet, arrived a century earlier, proclaiming God's message of repentance. Miraculously, Nineveh responded, and spiritual renewal swept through the streets. In the greatest city-wide revival the world has seen, the once-proud city humbled itself before God.

However, as time passed, the spiritual awakening vanished. The people of Nineveh did not pass on the lessons of Jonah to future generations. Soon they forgot about the God of creation, and moral decay set in. The once-repentant city fell into a state of spiritual complacency.

Having once tasted the sweetness of repentance, the nation now embraced the bitterness of sin. Their military power rose as their spiritual passion fell. The Assyrians captured the Northern Kingdom of Israel and now threatened the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Nahum's Prophecy

Unlike Jonah, Nahum did not prophesy directly to Nineveh. Instead, he remained in Judah and vividly portrayed the consequences of spiritual backsliding, detailing the impending fall of Nineveh. The rise and fall of Nineveh's spiritual condition served as a warning to Judah, and news of God's destruction of their enemy brought comfort to the people.

Nahum opens with a poetic declaration of God's character. The prophet paints a vivid picture of God's power over creation and His ability to unleash His wrath upon those who rebel against Him.

Nahum proclaims God's judgment upon the prideful and wicked people of Nineveh. He vividly describes the destruction of the city, the event that marked the beginning of the end for the Assyrian Empire.

Amid pronouncing judgment, Nahum offers comfort and hope to God's people. He assures them God will bring an end to their suffering and reminds them of God's goodness, faithfulness, and protection. He depicts a powerful image of God as a stronghold for those who trust in Him, a place of refuge in times of trouble.

As God humbled King Manasseh, perhaps Nahum's prophecy helped influence the king to repent and serve God (2 Chronicles 33:10-17). Nahum's warning, along with his comforting promise, most certainly influenced King Josiah and the people of Judah to rebuild the Holy Places, as they wholeheartedly served God (2 Kings 22-23, 2 Chronicles 34).

In a world echoing the moral challenges of ancient Judah, today's Christians can find guidance from Nahum's prophecy.

1. God's Is Sovereign

"Nineveh: 'You will have no descendants to bear your name. I will destroy the images and idols that are in the temple of your gods. I will prepare your grave, for you are vile.' ... The Lord will restore the splendor of Jacob like the splendor of Israel, though destroyers have laid them waste and have ruined their vines" (Nahum 1:14, 2:2).

Nahum underscores God's sovereignty over nations and individuals. The Lord God will be the one to annihilate Nineveh, and He alone will restore the splendor of Jacob.

Nahum's prophecy encourages Christians today to trust in God's ultimate control and His ability to bring down the powers of evil. Even in the face of discouraging circumstances, believers can find hope and confidence in God's sovereign reign.

The Apostle Paul reminds us, "There is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God" (Romans 13:1).

2. God Provides Protection and Refuge

"The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him" (Nahum 1:7).

As Nahum unfolds God's devastating plans for Nineveh, he stops to assure Judah God is on their side and will comfort them. The same Almighty power that brings judgement on Assyria will provide a refuge and stronghold in Judah's time of trouble. God both saves and destroys. Those who reject and resist God have every reason to live in terror of Him, but those who believe in and trust Him live in the security of His protection and love.

When terrible things happen, it's easy to assume God has forgotten us. Nahum offers three assurances to Judah.

God is Good

God is a Strong Refuge

God Cares

Regardless of our outward circumstances, God cares. Today, we can find comfort and strength knowing the Lord is our protector, and we can seek refuge in Him during difficult times.

The Apostle Paul reminds us, “The Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one” (2 Thessalonians 3:3).

The psalmists declare, “The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. ... God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalm 18:2; 46:1).

3. God Is Righteous and Just

“The Lord is slow to anger but great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished” (Nahum 1:3).

God doesn't want people to fail. He gives them opportunities to repent and enter heaven. However, if they persist in sin, punishment awaits them.

While God is a loving God and will comfort and protect those who follow Him, Nahum teaches us God is also just and righteous. He holds the wicked accountable for their actions. Believers can find comfort and assurance knowing God sees and will ultimately judge all evil and wrongdoing.

“The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished” (Exodus 34:6-7).

The Apostle Peter reminds us, “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare” (2 Peter 3:8-10).

4. Sin Has Consequences

“The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The Lord takes vengeance on his foes and vents his wrath against his enemies. ... With an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh; he will pursue his foes into the realm of darkness” (Nahum 1:2, 8).

Nahum warns about the destructive consequences of sin. His prophecy reminds us that unrepentant sin leads to separation from God. God is holy and He is jealous for His holy Scripture. He exhibits a righteous indignation against all who defy His authority and disobey His Word.

The annihilation of Nineveh is a foreshadowing of the ultimate consequence of those who oppose God.

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades

gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11-15).

5. We Must Proclaim God’s Word

“This is what the Lord says ... The Lord has given a command concerning you” (Nahum 1:12, 14).

Nahum was not afraid to proclaim God’s Word. His prophecy emphasizes the importance of declaring God’s truth. Christians are called to boldly declare God’s message of justice, mercy, and redemption, even in the face of opposition or indifference.

We must guard against the pitfalls of spiritual complacency. Nineveh’s spiritual journey, from the height of revival during Jonah’s time to the depths of moral decline in Nahum’s era, stands as a warning to all generations. Throughout church history, we see societies experience spiritual awakening only to revert to moral decay generations later. Churches on fire for God, boldly proclaiming the gospel, turn to empty halls with barely a flickering flame among a remnant of what once was.

We need to be diligent to pass our faith on to future generations. As the psalmist declares, “I will sing of the Lord’s great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations” (Psalm 89:1).

Amid the spiritual darkness, Nahum stands as a voice of hope to those who follow the Lord. He presents a powerful message of God’s judgment upon Nineveh and how those who oppose Him will ultimately receive their punishment. Nahum also assures us God’s loving arms will comfort and protect those who trust in Him. He encourages us to find joy in God’s righteousness, acknowledging His ultimate power and authority over all nations.