



## "When God's Patience Runs Dry" (Nahum)

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Intro: As we studied Isaiah, I felt led to study the remaining OT books in chronological order. So instead of going immediately to Jeremiah, the next book in our Bibles, we went instead to Micah (brief review?). The next prophet to show up on the scene after Micah was Nahum...

As Nahum begins his ministry, the northern kingdom of Israel has fallen to the Assyrians, and they were now plundering portions of Judah. II Kings 18-19 tells us that Hezekiah rebelled against Assyria. Judah had been paying tribute to keep the Assyrians from attacking, but when he rebelled, the Assyrian army came swiftly upon them. With the country now in ruins, only Jerusalem remained intact. At this time Isaiah warned that Assyria's arrogance would be her downfall, encouraging Hezekiah and the remaining remnant to trust the Lord. As a result, God annihilated 185,000 Assyrian troops in one encounter. But even though Assyria had felt the powerful arm of the Lord, they later regrouped, refusing to repent.

Written around 630 B.C., Nahum is a sequel to the book of Jonah. Remember God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach a message of repentance. But instead Jonah hopped on a ship headed for Tarshish. Why? Because Jonah did not want the Ninevites to be given an opportunity to repent. History records for us that they were the most cruel and brutal people in history. And they were no friends of Israel, that's for sure! So God arranged for a big fish to swallow Jonah, then regurgitate him up on land, and afterward Jonah did go to Nineveh. Jonah 3:3 tells us that it took Jonah three days to walk through the city of Nineveh, confirming what we know from history that Nineveh was a very large city. They say some 600,000 people lived there at the time. And when Jonah preached there, 600,000 people repented. It is one of the greatest (if not the greatest) revival in history!

Fast forward about 150 years, and Nahum is prophesying gloom and doom to the very city that 150 years earlier experienced tremendous revival. Now they have gone back to their old ways. For the outline of our text, I have borrowed from John Courson.

### I. THE TEXT

#### A. Nineveh's Doom Declared (Ch.1)

\* vv.2-3 simply tell us that God is extremely patient, but one day His patience will run dry.

\* See II Peter 3:9-12

\* v.8a This is exactly how Nineveh fell (more on that a little later).

\* v.10 Their doom came during a drunken party

\* v.15 Nahum means "consolation, comfort," an interesting name for a prophet who prophesies gloom & doom upon the city of Nineveh and the people of Assyria. How is this gloom and doom message good news? It's not good news for the Ninevites, but very good news for Judah, because the Assyrians had brutalized Israel, and now were ravaging Judah. So news of her doom was good news indeed! Isaiah uses the same terminology in referring to the day when God's enemies will be destroyed and Zion will be restored (Isa.52:7). And of course Paul used this verse in referring to those who proclaim the message of the gospel (Rom.10:14-15), because it is through the message of the gospel that we have sure hope of a coming day when every enemy of God will be destroyed!

## B. Nineveh's Doom Described (Ch.2)

\* v.1 This is sarcasm. There is no security when God's patience runs dry!

\* v.2 Once again a prophetic glimpse of the day when God will judge the enemies of His people.

\* v.3a The Babylonians soldiers wore red, the Medes scarlet.

\* v.5 This probably refers to the king of Assyria directing some hand picked troops to put up some kind of protective shield to defend against the oncoming attack. The picture is not of panic, because only hand picked troops go to make the shield secure. Though the king feels completely secure, these troops "stumble" on the way to their assignment.

\* v.6 This describes a sudden flood that devastates the palace.

\* v.8 This describes people fleeing as the flood waters come. Some people, perhaps army officers and city leaders call for people to stop, but panic has ensued and everyone is running for their lives.

\* Here the pillage begins. The enemy is now inside, and what plunder they discover! Nineveh had supplies to last for years. And Iraqi archaeologists 25 miles south of ancient Nineveh between 1988-90 opened tombs of Assyrian queens, discovering masses of gold jewelry, dishes, bowls, & a variety of other very valuable objects. The Babylonian Chronicle notes the "heavy plunder" Babylonian forces took from Nineveh and other places in Assyria.

\* vv.11-13 Though Nineveh was accustomed to preying on others, now she became prey, because God had now come against her.

## C. Nineveh's Doom Deserved

\* vv.1-7 They were guilty of lying, murder, brutality, witchcraft, lust (They raped the women victims of the peoples they conquered), prostitution, etc. Inscriptions that have been found reveal their brutal character. "I captured many soldiers alive. The rest of them I burnt...I erected on

stakes 700 soldiers before their gate...I burnt their adolescent boys and girls." When Sennacherib conquered Babylon, he said, "I filled the city squares with their corpses." Relief sculptures depict Assyrian soldiers bringing the heads of their enemies for secretaries to record.

\* vv.8-11 You thought you were impregnable

\* v.12 You will fall as ripe figs fall from the tree

\* v.13a Your mighty warriors will be powerless to defend themselves.

\* v.14 Sarcasm, no amount of preparation will keep you secure

\* v.16 Their trust was not only in their military might, but in their money. Listen up  
America!

\* v.17 When disaster sent from the Lord comes, everyone flees

\* vv.18-19 When the Assyrians fell, and the news spread of her destruction, people clapped in delight, because her cruelty had afflicted peoples far and wide.

## II. LESSONS

### A. Never Confuse God's Patience With Passivity/Weakness

\* Noah warned people for 120 years, and it was a day when every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was evil all the time...

\* Exodus - God was patient, but His patience finally ran dry

\* Isaiah 61:1-2; I Thess.4:6; Rev.2:18-21

### B. Learn From People Who Go Back To Their Former Ways After Experiencing Repentance/Revival.

\* God reminded them of his power, and of certain judgment if they refused to repent. During Hezekiah's reign, Assyria experienced firsthand the might and power of the God of Israel (185,000 Assyrians warriors...). But despite this stunning defeat, they regrouped and remained completely unrepentant.

\* God spoke to Balaam clearly (Num.22), but even after making a confession and a commitment to the Lord, and experiencing the Holy Spirit coming upon him repeatedly, allowing him to prophesy, still Balaam turned back to his old ways. Balaam then lived for years before facing God's judgment, but it finally came (see Judges 13:22).

\* See II Peter 2:20-22

### C. Don't Make The Mistake Of Believing You Could Not Face Judgment - Today!

\* Before her fall, Nineveh had withstood three attacks in three years by the united forces of the Medes to the north and the Babylonians to the south. Each time they simply closed themselves within their fortress and hunkered down. In time their enemies gave up and went back home. Nineveh was discovered in 1845, and we know a great deal about this ancient city now that it has been excavated. The wall surrounding Nineveh was so thick chariots could race on top of it. Interspersed atop this wall were 1200 towers from which soldiers could rain down boulders, arrows, and spears on any enemy audacious enough to approach. They stored enough food in Nineveh to sustain themselves for years, so a siege by an invading army was never successful.

\* Nineveh's judgment came "without warning." Although they had been warned for years through God's prophetic word, they ignored the warning, and when they fell, they fell suddenly. They were caught "off guard." During one of their drunken parties celebrating yet another victory against the invasion attempts of the Medes & Babylonians, God sent so much rain that the Euphrates river (which flowed through the heart of Nineveh) flooded, causing the foundation of the mighty wall to crumble. The Medes and Babylonians then stormed through the breaches in the wall and pounced upon drunk and unsuspecting people.

\* See Matthew 24:36-44

\* Luke 12: 45 But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk.

46 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

\* Two St. Pete. Police officers; other examples (see SPT)

\* Today, if you hear His voice...

D. Don't Believe, Because You Are Not As Vile As The People Of Nineveh, That You Will Escape Judgment.

\* See Luke 13:1-5

E. As You Face A World Filled With Gloom & Doom, Be Encouraged Through The Message of The Gospel.

\* See Rom.5:8-10; Col.1:21-21-23; Phil.3:18-21; II Thess.1:6-10.