

The Lord of Hosts vs. Nineveh Nahum 1-3

I would venture to say that most of you have never heard a sermon on Nahum. **Na-Who?** I never have.

- I can hardly wait to hear what I'm going to say!
- I've been up to my eyeballs in Ninevites for the last month trying to prepare for this message.
- Some of the preachers I admire just skipped Nahum!
- I found a total of 4 sermons at one popular site that has a bunch of sermons.
- I had to purchase one for \$2.50. This one may not be worth a nickel, but here we go.
- It's not an easy one to **read**, much less **preach**! How many of you read Nahum this week and thought, "**Wow, that was scintillating? I think I will go change the world now**"

How do we apply the central message of Nahum, which is
"Nineveh will be destroyed"?

"Well, I don't know any Ninevites, and it really stinks to be one... let's just sing some more".

Features of Nahum

It's brief – 47 verses

It's about **Nineveh**. You can think of it as, "the Book of Nineveh."

The theme is clear: Nineveh is toast. Nineveh is as good as dead.

- Nineveh was the capitol of Assyria, located on the Tigris River.
- On the opposite side of the bank is the modern city **Mosul, Iraq** – 2nd largest city in Iraq.

Nahum is the sequel to Jonah!

- Nahum is set about 100 years after Jonah preached to these people.
- **Future generations were not repentant.**
- Their repentance did not last beyond 745 B.C when Tiglath-pileser III made his people the leading military power in the Near East.
- The Empire was established **by bloodshed and massacre, cruelty and torture, plundering, and exiling, being as vicious as any empire in human history.**
- Succeeding rulers continued what Tiglath-pileser started, and in **722 they took Israel (NK).** (**2 Kings 17**)
- By Nahum's day, the NK had fallen already (722) and the SK remained a vassal state of the Assyrian Empire.
- Judah had suffered under this oppressive regime for **about 100 years.**
- **Sennacherib (700-681) made Nineveh the capitol. It was the largest city in the world for about 50 years. (First mentioned in Gen 10:11)**
- In 612, Nineveh was destroyed, never restored, making the end of Assyria.

But at the time of Nahum's writing,
Nineveh was at the height of its power.

The appeared invincible and unstoppable. But not for the Lord of Hosts!

- The word “**Nineveh**” became **synonymous** with **savagery** and **tyranny**.
- The 8 successive kings leading up to this period was like **having 8 Hitler’s in a row.**

Walk Through Nahum

What I want to do is run through this short, terrifying and beautiful book, and then gather up four applications for us: a word of “**worship,**” “**hope,**” “**warning,**” and “**mission.**”

1:1: It’s a vision; it’s an oracle (a message of woe); and a book.

- Most of the prophecies were not books but compilations of sermons – across a lot of time. Micah was like a sermon anthology.
- But Nahum is a book. Consequently it read more like a book if you were reading in Hebrew you would see remarkable poetry and literary skill.
- We don’t know where Elkosh is (perhaps Caperneum)

1:2-3:19: Almost every verse deals with the destruction of this world superpower.

Just look at the **headings** in your Bible...

#1: God’s Wrath Against Nineveh (1:2-2:2)

Nineveh will fall; Judah will be saved

A. A Hymn of Praise (1:2-11)

The book begins by extolling God as “Divine Warrior.” (Many hymns like Ps 68) Temper Longman states, that in the book of Psalms there are three types of Divine Warrior Hymns:

- (1) Those sung **before a battle**, calling on God’s aid (**Ps 7.1-2**);
- (2) Those sung **during the battle**, focusing on the Lord’s protection (**Ps 91.1**);
- (3) Those sung **after the battle**, celebrating the Lord’s victory (**Ps 98.1**)

He adds that Nahum bears the most similarity to the third type.

- But the interesting fact is Nahum celebrates the victory before it happened!
- It is because the victory of God is certain!
- It is like the songs of Revelation! That final victory is certain!

Nahum tells us who God is.

- “What are your thoughts about God?” (1:9)
- “People will believe anything” (Spider Man)
- It is shocking what people won’t believe, and what they will believe.

Nahum, like Elijah facing the prophets of Baal, announces who the real God is.

1. The Lord is Jealous, Avenging and Wrathful (1:2)

Judgment will come because God is **jealous** for his people.

- Usually this is not a positive attribute but a negative one.
- But the Bible often describes God as being jealous.

- Recall the Second Commandment (Ex 20:5), and then later in Ex 34:14.
- **God loves his his people. He wants our love and loyalty.**
- Packer: “the jealousy of God requires us to be zealous for God.”
- The Lord’s Jealousy is expressed in his **wrath** and **vengeance**.
- God’s wrath an expression of his **holiness**.
- He will judge his enemies wherever they may be.
- **The Lord is a warrior (Exodus 15)**
- Revelation – the wrath of the lamb.

Not just an OT concept: Ephesians 2 — objects of wrath” — “but God”

- “If you don’t understand or believe in the wrath of God, the gospel will not thrill, empower, or move you.” (Keller)
- **There is nothing thrilling about universalism.**

2. The Lord is Patient (1:3a)

- **God doesn’t fly off the handle; his wrath is tempered with patience.**
- 2 Pet 3:8-9. But Patience has an end.

3. The Lord is Just (1:3b)

He will not clear the guilty.

Recall Exodus 34:6-7 – cited frequently by the minor prophets:

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

These attributes are on display in Jonah and Nahum.

- **The Lord’s compassion is magnified in Jonah; The Lord not clearing the iniquity is magnified in Nahum.**
- **If you think the message to Nahum is harsh, remember Jonah.**
- **God gave the message to them and they repented and he relented.**
- **But this is a new generation of Ninevites and they want nothing to do with Yahweh.**
- **The same principle applies today: the word goes out, and you can be saved; but if you don’t judgment is coming.**
- **“If man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow” (Ps 7:12)**

This idea offends many in our culture today, as our country glorifies “tolerance”

- **One cannot imagine God being “intolerant” of our sin & angry enough to punish us.**
- Nahum will not let us get away with such a view of God.
- And **this is not just an OT concept.**
 - Recall the majestic book of **Romans** – **1:18ff** - bad news before the good news.

- Recall **John 3:36**: “Whoever believes in the son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”
- **God’s wrath is taught throughout the Bible, as well as his gracious salvation.**
 - a. In Christ, we do not have to fear God’s judgment and wrath.
 - b. We worship Christ today because he absorbed the wrath of God and his given us saving grace.
 - c. In “**wrath , remember mercy**” (**Habakkuk**)
 - d. At **the cross, God has!**
 - e. **If you don’t see the holiness of God, you will not see your sin, and you will not cherish the crucified Son of God.**

4. The Lord is Omnipotent (1:3c-6)

3c: Here is a picture of God as a warrior who rides the storm clouds into battle!

- **Ps 18:7-15; Ps 68:32-35; Matt 24:30**
- Yahweh, not Baal is the storm rider, who controls the weather and the winds!

4: He dries up the sea; makes Rivers run dry – eg, Exodus, Jordan

- Mark 4 – the disciples learn this

4b: Bashan and Carmel were noted for luxuriant pastures and woodlands; the cedars of Lebanon were famous for strength – but with a word from the Lord they would be no more.

5 – the earth trembles before him, and all who live in it.

6: No one can stand before him. Huge boulders are shattered before him.

5. The Lord is Good (1:7)

His goodness is expressed in **five ways in chapter 1:**

1. **He will take vengeance on our enemies (2-3);**
2. **He is slow to anger (3)**
3. **He is stronghold in days of trouble (7). We can go to him in trouble! He’s good!**
4. **He knows us (7)**
5. **His salvation brings freedom and peace (12b; 15);**
 - In holy judgment and wrath, the Almighty will purge the world of all evil in the end, and Paradise will be restored. that’s good news.

6. The Lord is Invincible (1:8-11)

8: With an overwhelming flood he sweeps his enemies away. **Even Nineveh!**

- Resistance is futile because of his power.
- God’s justice will prevail eventually! He is invincible.
- **If you doubt that, just try to book a flight to Nineveh.**
- **They are a case study showing that the wicked ultimately do not prosper.**

9-11: This is similar to **Psalm 2** – Why oppose him? Instead take refuge in the Messiah!

B. A Promise of Judgment and Salvation (1:12-2:2)

He goes back and forth to judgment and salvation.

12a: Judgment on Nineveh

12b-13: Salvation for Judah

- Salvation as breaking the yoke, and releasing a prisoner.

*Broken yokes; busted chains;
Found now, in the Savior's name;
Let all his people, bless His name.*

14: Judgment on Nineveh

15: Salvation for Judah

Look to the Messenger (v. 15)

- In ancient times there were no communication devices like we have; they depended on messengers who would run throughout the countryside bearing important messages.
- They often stood atop mountains so that all could hear as he shouted his message (Isa 40:9).
- He proclaimed peace from the Assyrian armies.

Celebrate Your Feasts (15b) // Keep Your Promises (15c)

- With the end of the war, they can return to regular life, carrying on their feasts like Passover.

2:1 – Judgment on Nineveh

2:2: Salvation for Judah

All of it would come true...

- Chapter 2-3 - it would come true like the prophet foretold.
- That's a major lesson from the prophets: **God's Word will come to pass.**
- **You may try to deny it or ignore it; but not one word has failed!**
- **This is quite a prediction!**

#2: The Destruction of Nineveh (2:1-13)

Nineveh's fall will be great.

The chapter reads like an eyewitness account of the city being attacked, overrun by invading conquerors, and plundered.

1: "Scatterer" a collective whole of conquering soldiers, but it is the Lord who is behind it ultimately.

2 – a reason for judgment

3-5: The attacking army was a coalition **Medes, Babyonians, Scythians**

6-8 – the attacking army used the water system to help destroy the city

9: Nineveh was filled with wealth due to previous campaigns; but it was completely plundered.

10-12 a taunting song

- **lions** – the royal leaders
- the Assyrians called themselves "the lions" for their ferocity

- **v. 11:** No one had previously “disturbed them”
- **v. 12:** a description of Assyrian brutality

13: The Lord speaks a word of judgment.

Why will Nineveh fall? Because it is the will of the Lord.

“The Lord of hosts” -- the Lord of (angelic) Armies; the Lord of invincible power is against you.”

- “I will burn your chariots in smoke” (**Ps. 46**)
- “Sword of your young lions” – **Lord devouring their pride**
- “I will cut off your prey from the earth”
 - The Lord will take care of the **predator**
 - We need young men to be like God and be **protectors**.
- “The voice of your messengers will not be heard” -- notice the contrast in 1:15, two sets of messengers

#3: Woe to Nineveh (3:1-19)

Nineveh deserves the fall. They will be humiliated.

Bad day to be a Ninevite!

3:1 – This is their reputation

2-3 – battle, and slaughter of Nineveh

4: More reasons for judgment: **Violence, lying and greed**. Sins we must forsake.

- **They didn’t fall because they were Gentiles!** God already proved he had a heart for the nations (Jonah).
- **They fell because of their idolatry, violence, lying, greed...**
- **God had used Assyria to be a means of judgment on the N. Kingdom because of the N. Kingdom’s same sins!**
- **Now, God will judge Assyria.... I will return to this...**

5-7 – The Lord speaks a word of judgment

8-11 – Nineveh compared to Thebes.

Nineveh was not better fortified than Thebes, a powerful city in southern.

And yet it was destroyed.

8: This city had these canals and channels from the Nile that provided **security**.

9: Allies: Cush was south of Egypt. “Egypt” – northern Egypt. “Put” – probably the N African coastline, West of Libya

10: Assyria didn’t have the walls, nor the allies, and yet Thebes went down.

- **The Assyrians conquered them in some fifty years before the fall of Nineveh (663).**

11: Applies verses 8-10. **Just as drunken men can’t defend themselves against the attacker, neither will Nineveh be able to defend itself against the Lord.**

- Nineveh will find no refuge.

- There's only one source of refuge (1:7); but a hundred years after Jonah and they rejected Yahweh.

12-19: A final taunting song

16: What good was their wealth/merchants?

- "Riches do not profit on the day of wrath" (Prov 11:4)
- When archeologist finally found Nineveh they were amazed that there was nothing to show its wealth. It was totally plundered.
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3:19 – the book ends with the question, once again highlighting Assyria's viciousness: "From whom has not come your unceasing evil?" You won't get away with it.

Nations "clap their hands."

House: "One could no more mourn Assyria's fall than one could regret the fall from power of Hitler or Stalin or Napoleon."

4 Applications: Worship, Hope, Warning, & Mission

I think the primary applications to make come from chapter 1. I want to give you four of them. A word of (1) worship, (2) hope, (3) warning, and (4) mission.

#1: Worship. Praise the Lord who is our Divine Warrior (1:2-11)

Divine Warrior is a way to refer to God's judgment and salvation.

His triumph is comfort for his people.

But a warning for those who rebel against him.

- No nation on earth can endure when it sets itself against the Lord,

Nahum's song is like the song of the Exodus.

15 Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying,

"I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

2 The LORD is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation;
this is my God, and I will praise him,
my father's God, and I will exalt him.

3 The LORD is a man of war;
the LORD is his name.

4 "Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea,
and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea.

5 The floods covered them;
they went down into the depths like a stone.

6 Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power,
your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.

7 In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries;

- you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble.
- 8 At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up;
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.
- 9 The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.
I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.’
- 10 You blew with your wind; the sea covered them;
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.
- 11 “Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?
- 12 You stretched out your right hand;
the earth swallowed them.
- 13 “You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed;
you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.
- 14 The peoples have heard; they tremble;
pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia.
- 15 Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed;
trembling seizes the leaders of Moab;
all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.
- 16 Terror and dread fall upon them;
because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone,
till your people, O LORD, pass by,
till the people pass by whom you have purchased.
- 17 You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain,
the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode,
the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.
- 18 The LORD will reign forever and ever.”

¹⁹ For when the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them, but the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea. ²⁰ Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. ²¹ And Miriam sang to them:

“Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.”

He is triumphant!

Nahum shows us that our God is sovereign and our God will have the last word on injustice and evil. That’s good news.

- **He will have the final word on world history!**
- **He is the Lord of Hosts; He is the Lord of History!**
- **The final message is not “the circle of life” but Jesus is Lord.”**

This brings us “**comfort**” (which is what Nahum means).

- **Assyria was the world superpower; like Egypt, but they were like an anthill to Almighty God.**

- Take God seriously! Don't trifle with him!

The Bible is a story of a battle.

- A superficial reading would pit the OT and NT against each other because of warfare, *but it is actually a unifying them.*
- We are in a battle.
- Good news, Jesus has won over our greatest enemies.
- And he is with us as we face our foes.
- Here's a helpful graphic:



This theme of “**divine warrior**” can be observed throughout Scripture. (5 Phases)

Phase 1: Old Testament: Either God against Israel's enemies; or God against Israel.

1. God against Egypt (Ex 14)

2. God against Israel's enemies when entering the promised land

- There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel. **Joshua 10:14**
- And Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel. **Joshua 10:42**
- And you have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the Lord your God who has fought for you **Joshua 23:3**
- One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the Lord your God who fights for you, just as he promised you. **Joshua 23:10**
- **The battle was the Lord's -- Gideon**
- **This verse is stated twice in Psalms: “With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes.” (Ps 60.12; 108.13)**

3. God against Israel for priestly corruption (1 Sam 4)
4. God against the Northern tribes of Israel through Assyria (2 Kings 17; Mic 1:6)
5. God against Assyria (Nahum)
6. God against Judah through Babylon (2 Kings 25)
7. God against Nehemiah's foes after the people entered back to Jerusalem when Babylon was taken by Persia "The Lord will fight for us" (4:20)

Phase 2: Post-Exilic Anticipation of Divine Warrior

- God promises will again fight for his people through the Messiah (Zech 14)
 - Thought not as they expected; he came humble on a colt, not on a war horse.

Phase 3: Jesus victory over Satan (and sin and death)

- His triumph came through the events of Easter!
- He delivered us from human bondage to sin, death and the evil one.

Colossians 2:13-15

¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

- He is Christus Victor.
- He brought spiritual deliverance: Matthew 11:1-5; Luke 4:18-19
- At the cross, we see our Warrior-Savior's love for us.
- On Friday, he was the dying warrior, dying to save us; but on Sunday, he is the victorious warrior, who rose again securing our salvation.

Phase 4: Believer's Spiritual Warfare

- In between his first and second coming, we are in a war (Eph 6).
- We aren't conquering lands and overtaking cities; we are engaged in a spiritual war.
- We are seeking to put sin to death in our lives.
- We are seeking to proclaim the gospel and engage in the work of love.
- And we are not powerless!
 - Our weapons are spiritual
 - The word of God, prayer
 - One of the reasons people don't read the Bible and pray like they should is they don't understand how desperate they are.
 - They don't know there is a war.

Phase 5: The Final Battle

- He will come again and reign forever.
- Revelation 19:11-21 describes the final necessary battle of the Lord as warrior, triumphing over evil once and for all.
- Bringing an end on that cosmic battle introduced in Gem 3:15.

- ***Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. Rev 1:7***

We don't have a wimpy God!

Look at the book of Nahum! Look at the story of the Bible!

- **Through him, we are conquerors. God is not against us; but he is for us (Rom 8:31).**
- **Through Christ, we are empowered to go into this broken world and do the King's work of speaking truth and showing love -- until the battle is over.**
- **It will be over.**
- **And we know who wins!**
 - **In C.S. Lewis' *Voyage of the Dawnreader* movie, the courageous little mouse, Reepicheep, has the opportunity to go the Aslan's country. He accepts the invitation ... he looks at his sword, he says, "I won't be needing this anymore."**
- **The war will be over soon, in the meantime, we fight knowing that "If God is for us, who can be against us?"**

Rejoice in your divine warrior.

#2: Hope. Find your refuge in the Messiah who is a stronghold for his people. (1:7)

- **So many passages on God as our refuge:**
- **Psalm 7:1; 46; Psalm 57; 61:2-3; 62:5-8**
- **The one that may bear most similarity to this passage is Psalm 2:**

- 2 Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
- 2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,
- 3 "Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."
- 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
- 5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
- 6 "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."
- 7 I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.
- 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
- 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."
- 10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;

be warned, O rulers of the earth.

- 11 Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
- 12 Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

**You are blessed if you find refuge in the Messiah.
Have you?**

You can't live on **your parents' faith.**

- Faith is not like getting your parents' eye color or sharing their interests.
- You must believe.

In a hundred years, Nineveh was different than the days of Jonah.

- Their ancestors experienced a revival.
- We must remember this.
- Repentance is something we do daily.
- You can't live on yesterday's faithfulness.

#3: Warning. Worldly success does not hide our sin from God. (1:14)

- The mightiest nation on earth was called "Vile."
- This was true for both Israel and Assyria. (as we saw in Micah)
- The most important thing about you is your character not your success.
- It is your heart.
- America needs to realize this.
- The church must realize this.
- We must realize this.

#4: Mission. We are sent into this broken world to proclaim good news of salvation (1:15)

- The message of Nahum is not just one of judgment and salvation; it's also points to our mission of proclaiming the good news! (3:17)

In Romans 10:15, Paul talks about preaching the good news of salvation, with a quotation from this ancient book of Nahum (along with Isaiah 52:7).

Isaiah 52:7

- 7 How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings good news,
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,
who publishes salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

In Romans 10, Paul talks about the urgency of evangelism and the necessity of faith in Christ.

He quotes Isaiah 52:7/Nahum 1:15 to honor those who are faithfully proclaiming the gospel regularly

Romans 10

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

In the days of Nahum and Isaiah, one may rejoice at the arrival of a messenger who brought good news regarding deliverance from an enemy nation, like Babylon or Assyria.

But now, gospel messengers are bringing even better news of Christ’s victory over sin and death.

The world needs to hear the good news of Jesus Christ, who takes off the yoke, and removes our shackles.

Those who bring good news have “beautiful feet.”

- That’s an interesting phrase.
- **Most of you probably didn’t fall in love with your spouse because of his or her feet!**
- **I know my wife didn’t. (It was my physique! Why you laughing! She will tell you friendship ... then physique)**

The way to have **beautiful feet** is not through a **pedicure but through proclamation!**

- Leon Morris writes, “Messengers normally travelled on foot and the feet were the significant members. They might be dirty and smell after a long, hot journey, but to those who eagerly awaited good news they were beautiful” (Morris, 390-91).

Who was the first person to show you the beauty of Jesus? I was recently asked this question..., **The Lord used my mother, friends, and two particular teammates.**

These gospel witnesses never did anything “sensational.”

- They simply lived out their faith in the ordinary rhythm of life and **had gospel conversations with me.**
- God in his grace uses the word of Christ to bring people to faith in Christ (**Rom 10:17**).

Judgment is certain – therefore let’s tell the world to flee the wrath to come by looking to Jesus Christ, and finding refuge in him.

Let's live on mission in the power of our divine warrior.