



NAHUM

The Lord is Good

3 Studies

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Welcome to Nahum, “The Lord is Good”

The reluctant prophet Jonah famously preached to the city of Ninevah, the great city of the Assyrian Empire. In God’s kindness, the people of the city repented and were spared God’s judgment.

Many years later, with sin and wickedness having risen again, God’s prophet Nahum speaks of the city’s destruction, and indeed the end of the entire Assyrian empire. Ninevah fell in 612 BC, establishing Nahum’s ministry as taking place some time prior to that date.

Nahum’s prophecy, though confronting and graphic, is good news for all who have ever despaired at those who do evil appearing to get away without facing justice.

These dreadful words remind us of the terrible consequences of sin, and that God hates sin and longs for justice, even more than we do, for the Lord is good!

Nahum 1

The Lord is Good

- 1.** In the school yard, did you tend to rescue other children from danger or bullies? Or were you the one being rescued?
- 2.** Can you think of a circumstance when you saw a failure of justice?
How did you want to respond?
- 3.** In what circumstances do you think it would be right for God's anger to be directed at people?

Read Nahum 1

- 4.** What feelings arise when you read of God's anger?
- 5.** How does the description of God's character in verse 2 assure us that God's anger at Ninevah is not a capricious, unpredictable, reaction?
- 6.** How does the statement "The Lord is good" (v 7) fit with the picture of God's anger and judgement in the earlier verses?

- 7.** In what circumstances is anger, even violence, directed at one party, good news for others?

- 8.** For whom would God's word to Ninevah been extremely good news?

- 9.** A friend tells you they believe that God is real, but not at all involved in the world. How would you respond in the light of Nahum 1?

- 10.** What do we learn about sin in this section?

- 11.** Why is it easy to imagine the sins of the Assyrians were so much worse than our own?

- 12.** How does the cross of Christ further our understanding of both God's judgment and God's kindness which are on view here?

- 13.** What does Nahum teach us about God's justice in this chapter?

- 14.** How does Nahum's prophecy contribute to our understanding of God?

- 15.** How do you see that "The LORD is slow to anger" (v 3) today?

- 16.** What comfort does this prophecy offer to someone who fears that evil will ultimately triumph?

Nahum 2

I am Against You

- 1.** Have you ever restored a piece of furniture, an artwork, a car or a house?
What was most the most satisfying part of the process?

- 2.** When do you feel the most safe and secure?

- 3.** Can you recall a situation in which you witnessed “the tables being turned”?
How did you feel?

Read Nahum 2

- 4.** What does the way of describing the attack on Ninevah as if it is currently taking place help us understand about this prophecy?

- 5.** Why do you think the destinies of Ninevah and Israel are compared side by side here?

- 6.** Ninevah was over-run by an alliance of the Babylonians and the Medes. How can Nahum speak of the city’s destruction as the work of God?

- 7.** What aspects of this oracle picture the totality of God's judgement on the sin of Assyria?

- 8.** Remember that these words are in the Jewish Scriptures, though they speak of God's judgement on Assyria. What purpose do they serve God's people Israel in the 7th Century BC and following?

- 9.** What will it look like for God to be "against" those who do evil (v 13)?

- 10.** How does the cross of Christ help us understand God's opposition to sin?

- 11.** In what areas of life do you see people trying to stand with "all your strength" (v 1) against God and his purposes?

- 12.** We might not picture ourselves as a "lion" (v 11) but what image of ourselves might we be clinging to, that actually puts us at odds with God's purposes?

- 13.** In what areas of life can we apply the promise of this prophecy, that God is able to restore his people despite utter desolation?
- 14.** When is it hardest to trust in God?
How can these words be an encouragement to you in those times?
- 15.** How can we be confident that God will never say to us, “I am against you”?

Nahum 3

Woe to the city of blood

1. Who do the people of your town or suburb enjoy comparing themselves favourably against?
2. Are you the sort of person who reads the last page of a book first?
Why or why not?
Whichever your preference, have you ever finished a book and wished you'd done the opposite?
3. When you were a child, what did you think you could do better than any of your friends?

Read Nahum 3

Ninevah truly deserved the title, "the city of blood" (v 1). One commentator recounts some of their practices;

"... cutting off hands and feet, ears and noses, gouging out eyes, lopping off heads and then binding them to vines or heaping them up before city gates; ... captives could be impaled or flayed alive through a process in which their skin was gradually and completely removed."
Maier, W. A. *The Book of Nahum: A Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), p 292.

4. How do you respond when you read even that small snippet of the Assyrian's atrocities?
5. How should we think and feel about the downfall of those who do evil?

- 6.** How do we manage to convince ourselves that sin has no consequences?

- 7.** What have the Assyrians trusted in and taken pride in?

- 8.** How does Nahum show that faith in these things is misplaced?

- 9.** We don't put our faith in walls (v 8), fortresses (v 12). Or troops, (v 13), so what things are we tempted to trust in?

- 10.** In what ways does this prophecy capture the foolishness of trying to stand against God?

- 11.** In what kinds of situations are we tempted to subjugate doing what's right to personal interest?

- 12.** How can we guard against this temptation that so overtook the ancient Assyrians?

- 13.** How does this terrible oracle show us the consequences of sin?

- 14.** What does the cross of Christ demonstrate about the consequences of sin beyond even what is pictured here?

- 15.** What hope is contained in this oracle?

- 16.** How does the death of Jesus in our place secure a rescue from the enemies against whom we are powerless?

- 17.** You have a friend who is upset at God for the violence they believe he approves of, and also for allowing innocent suffering in the world. How would Nahum 3 shape your response?

- 18.** What does the cross of Christ add to your response to your friend?

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