

I invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Nahum. This morning we will be focusing our attention on chapter 3. This morning we will be finishing up the book of Nahum

Over the last several weeks we have been able to work through the book of Nahum. As we have done so, we have not just studied God's judgment, we have seen it. At times, we have almost felt it. At times it may have appeared "danger close." As we are concluding this book today, it might be nice just to take a moment to sum things up.

It's always good to be able to summarize books of the Bible and have a general outline that you can fall back on. The book of Nahum is an easy one in that regard because it divides nicely along its chapter divisions.

One way to sum it up is like this:

- Chapter 1 - The verdict of God's Judgment
- Chapter 2 - The vision of God's judgment
- Chapter 3 - The vindication of God's judgment

Another way of laying it out would be to say that...

- Chapter 1 - God's judgment is decreed
- Chapter 2 - God's judgment is described
- Chapter 3 - God's judgment is deserved

This morning we are going to see that God's judgment on Nineveh was deserved.

As we have walked through this book, we have seen that Nahum has not been sparing in his predictions. We know that the things that fell upon Nineveh were no light matters. God, in his anger, came against Nineveh and he came against it in a most ruthless way.

We have heard of the destruction, the plunder, the panic, and (most of all) we have heard of the massive loss of life.

As we hear of the merciless dealings and witness some of the carnage, we might naturally wonder why? Why is it that the Lord is so enraged? What has provoked him so terribly that he would treat them in this way?

As we come to chapter three, we get answers to that question. In this chapter Nahum lists out for us some of the top reasons why God would strike Nineveh. To be sure, we are not given all the reasons. I do not doubt that there would not be enough ink to lay out all the charges that could be laid against this wicked people.

However, in these verses Nahum does tell us that Nineveh had been involved with certain acts which were of a particularly egregious nature. He lists for us the capital sins, you might say. And, as a result, we can understand that the city got exactly what it deserved.

This morning we will be looking at what those sins were and we will see that Nahum also provides for us the corresponding judgments. In other words, Nahum not only tells us what they did, he also tells us what God would do to them as a result.

I. Violence

Nahum begins the chapter by saying, “Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder— no end to the prey!”

If you have been part of the Jonah/Nahum series that we have done, this should not surprise you. We’ve noted that the Assyrian Empire was renown for their heinous acts of violence. They really were guilty of what we today would call “crimes against humanity.”

So thirsty for bloodshed that they are actually called the “bloody city.” I’ve mentioned before how they had genocidal tendencies. When they conquered lands, they would often come in the form of massacres. I mentioned how the Assyrians had a penchant for decapitating people. One of the distinctive acts of the Assyrian armies was to stack the heads of their enemies in little pyramids. It was their little monument that they would leave behind after their conquest.

Of course, this degrading of humanity was not just something that was characteristic of the battlefield. They committed these atrocities because they had a low view of humanity. And that low view of humanity worked itself out in every part of the empire. There was no real regard for the life of one’s neighbor. Innocent people died in the streets of Nineveh all the time.

You can think of the justice system, in particular. That's why this first verse also mentions "lies and plunder." There would have been all kinds of corruption among the governors and royalty and in the court system. People would stand as false witnesses and deals would be cut in back rooms. Bribes would be given. And it would end up costing innocent people their lives.

And, it is one thing to have gangs and homicides. It is a whole different level of evil when the civil leaders are so flippant about the lives of their citizens. Governments are established for the just rule and protection of the innocent. That is supposed to be their one function in this world. When a government becomes corrupted like that and abuses its power in such an egregious way, God becomes highly incensed. This is perhaps an encouragement to us to continue to remember that the chief battle in our own time is that of abortion. While we can celebrate the fact that Roe V Wade was overturned, we should not be duped into thinking that abortion is a state's rights issue.

This is particularly a solemn injunction to us as Ohioans, as we have recently enshrined abortion in our constitution. Statistics were recently released and the number of abortions performed in Ohio this past year was said to have risen.

This is important to recognize in view of verses 2-3. These verses go on to speak of the blood that will be spilt in Nineveh as a result of their degeneration of life. Nahum speaks of the law of just retribution. The punishment fits the crime. And the picture isn't a pretty one. The blood that they shed comes back on their own heads as chariots run through Nineveh striking down people. So many people are slaughtered that he talks about heaps of corpses. There are so many bodies laying in the streets that people end up tripping over them as they try to run. But while the violence and bloodshed of Nineveh was perhaps the foremost sin, it was not the only sin of which the city was guilty. They also abused their power and created, what I would like to call, "oppressive seductions."

II. Abuse of power - Oppressive seductions

You'll notice that verse 4 talks about their "countless whorings of the prostitute." Nineveh is presented as this seductive woman who, as it says, "betrays nations with her whorings."

One of the ways that the Bible talks about whordom is by way of Idolatry. Israel, we are told in different books of the Bible, "played the whore" by going after other gods.

The commentaries make a distinction here though. This is likely referring to Nineveh's political tricks.

Let's just begin by getting familiar with the metaphor that Nahum is using. A prostitute uses her beauty and her other tricks tricks of the trade in order to seduce men. She may walk a certain way; she may talk a certain way; she may even use some charms and incantations to cast a spell over the gullible chap; to lure him in

That's what Nahum is saying that the Assyrian politicians had been doing. They lured other nations in with enticing policies and diplomatic actions. But they only did so in order to trap these nations and oppress them.

One of the commentaries uses Ahaz as an example. Ahaz called upon the Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pilazar. He was being attacked by a nation to the north and he saw the allure of making an alliance with Assyria.

Assyria could come in and attack that nation and rescue Judah. Well, that only led to Ahaz having to strip the temple of its gold and of its artifacts in order to pay tribute to Assyria.

So again, it comes down to seductive oppression. Assyria took advantage of other nations around them by trapping them and leaching off of them once they had them under their domination.

And again, it is one thing to trick your neighbor and swipe his lawnmower. It is another thing to be in positions of power and be doing these things. There is a special honor that leaders are to show. There's greater responsibility that elders have, that fathers have, that people in congress have. These are positions of influence and authority. And if you are using that authority in an oppressive way--for purposes of domination, then you are making a wicked use of your God given power.

A lust for power and tyranny is the very opposite of why the Lord puts you in that office.

Well, now you can understand why Nahum says what he does in verses 5-7. They acted like this prostitute, and they will be shamed like a prostitute. Nahum says that their skirt will be lifted up and their nakedness will be exposed. They will have filth thrown at them. He's just using language of humiliation here.

All in all, it is a complete degrading. It is not enough that Assyria will be attacked. It needs to be has to be ransacked and tossed on the heap of history.

The third sin that is mentioned is their arrogance, and you find it listed in verses 8-15.

III. Pride

Nineveh was a city that trusted in herself; in her fortifications and her armies. We've mentioned several times how they thought they were invincible and could withstand the siege of the Babylonian-Median coalition. Their armies were renown for being overwhelming in their power. And they gloated in that.

But look what he says in verse 8. Nahum says, "Are you better than Thebes that sat by the Nile, with water around her?"

Nahum is referring to an actual, historical event here. Thebes was the capital of Egypt and it fell to the Assyrians in 663 BC. Esarhaddon and his son Ashurbanipal laid siege to the city during the western expansion of the Assyrian Empire. And the city and Egypt as a whole, became a vassal state to the Assyrians.

The thing is that this city was a well fortified city. As our text says, it was surrounded by water. On the one side it had the Nile River. On the other side there was a mountain range and the Red Sea.

Moreover, there were a number of forces at its disposal. You read in verse 9 about how Thebes had treaties with Put and the Libyans. Those forces could be called out to help in a time of trouble.

So to take the city of Thebes would be no small feat. But that's exactly what Ashurbanipal did.

Now Nahum takes that event and turns it back on the Ninevites. He says, "Are you any better than Thebes?" You take pride in your fortifications. You trust in your military prowess. But it is just as foolish as Thebes thinking that it was indestructible.

It just goes to show that there is no security in this world except in the arms of our God. And if you trust in anything else, that's a radical blasphemy against God. You are saying that some human power is greater than what the Lord can provide.

Well, the rest of the passage shows what would eventually come about. The pride that they show results in shame and humiliation. Their fortress falls like ripe figs fall from a tree.

We went apple picking this past week. And we were amazed at all the apples that were strewn upon the ground. The storms that came in last week must have shaken the trees and caused them to fall. That's the kind of image here.

Verse 13 says the troops are like women. That's a humiliating thing. And then he says that the gates are wide open. It's like there are no bars on the windows or locks on the doors. Despite their defenses, it seems like the doors are wide open. They are going to be powerless to stop the advance of their enemies.

And we should pause here and simply remember how grievous the sin of pride is. We don't talk enough about vanity. But that's what this is. If you are trusting in your own power or thinking yourself to be so great, that is vain. It is an idolatry of the self. And the Lord simply finds it to be a personal challenge to knock down anything that seems to compete with him and exalt itself above him.

So why would God's judgment come? It is because of their violence, their abuse of their , because of their arrogance. Fourthly, they will be judged so severely because of their greed.

IV. Greed / Robbery

In verse 17 it talks about how they “increased their merchants.” They had increased them to the point that there seemed to be more merchants than the stars in the heavens.

Now, this is not some kind of condemnation of capitalism. This is not a word against honest economic development. Having a lot of businesses is a good thing. We want to encourage people to start businesses and expand those businesses.

You have to understand that the Assyrian economic system was not a God honoring system. These merchants were more like pirates. Assyria could come in and conquer a nation. Then they would take plunder from those nations around them and turn a profit by selling all the goods that they stole.

It is like someone bashing in your window, carting off your TV and selling it on ebay. They are making a lot of money, but they are not really producing anything. They are nothing more than entrepreneurial minded thieves.

That's what the Assyrians were doing. They were making a lot of money off the backs of these other nations that they were robbing.

That's why he talks about the locust and the grasshopper in verses 16-17. He says you were just like a grasshopper swooped in and ate the corn in the

fields. Well, recognize that there will be a bunch of locusts that come feed off of you. You stole from them; you will now find that all your goods will be stolen”

And that's how the passage ends. It ends by saying, “Your shepherds are asleep, O king of Assyria; your nobles slumber. Your people are scattered on the mountains with none to gather them. There is no easing your hurt; your wound is grievous. All who hear the news about you clap their hands over you. For upon whom has not come your unceasing evil?”

In other words, your glory will be stolen. You, in your greed, took from nations and robbed them of their glory. Now you will likewise suffer and you will be robbed of your glory.

Applications:

Now, by way of closing, I'd like to offer a few brief observations and applications. I don't want us to think that this text is all about Nineveh and things that happened long ago and far away. There are many things that this text teaches us.

First of all, it teaches us a couple things about Sin.

1. Sin is utterly heinous in the eyes of God.
2. Sin is not all the same. There are some sins that are much more vile in God's eyes than other sins.

There are a lot of people today who say that all sin is the same. But that is not true in the least. There are many sins which have a significantly greater degree of evil and, as a result, incur a greater punishment.

God's word is clear about this. Even this passage is clear when it shows us that the sins of leaders are of greater weight. Those who have positions of authority have a greater responsibility because their sins can be much greater by virtue of their office.

We who are leaders need to watch and be very careful.

3. The corporate nature of sin. There are individual sins that we all commit. But there are also sins of which we are corporately guilty. Maybe we do not commit those particular sins ourselves, but we are

part of an organization or community that does. We may, because of our being part of that community, tolerate those sins and participate in them some way.

Not everyone in Nineveh was a murderer. Not everyone in Assyria was doing the back room deals which lead to corruption in the judicial system. But they participated in that system and were corporately condemned for them because of it.

This is parallel to how we are corporately guilty in Adam. We are all liable to God's wrath and curse because of our connection to our first parents, Adam and Eve. And we must therefore recognize that we all stand corporately condemned apart from Christ.

While we cannot flesh this out more, it is important to think about the corporate nature of sin and be diligent to repent, in so far as we can, as a body.

4. God is just and we must acknowledge that he is. It is true that our God is slow to anger. But he is not lacking in it. There comes a point where he must execute his judgment upon the wicked. If people persist in their sin and do not show any remorse for it, God will come upon them in a way that shows no remorse.

This is important to recognize because it so often seems that God is silent and does not care. If you do not view things from a Biblical perspective, it may seem like you can keep on going in the way of evil and

that there is no real consequence. But what we should understand is that God is patient and he suffers long with sinners. He gives people time to repent and we are not to presume that he will remain docile forever.

Nahum's word is a warning for all who have not put their trust in Christ and devoted themselves to following him as his disciple. Nahum, in pointing out the coming day of the Lord against Nineveh reminds each and every one of us that there is a day which has been appointed where God will call us to give account for our sins. And in that day the Lord will let his justice be unveiled.

5. What it will be like on the day of judgment.

Nahum has listed the sins of Nineveh and let her guilt be known. Nahum essentially passes the sentence upon them as he gives the record of the case against Nineveh.

This is setting forth exactly what it will be like when Jesus comes again. The Bible tells us that he will appear as the judge of all mankind. And on that day the books will be opened and the sins of each person will be laid bare. Those who have not put their trust in Christ will find that their sins will be publicly exposed. They will not be able to hide the guilt because the evidence against them will be presented.

Then, on that day, they will be openly condemned. They will receive their sentence and they will be separated from the goodness and kindness of the Lord forever.

This is why we must repent and trust in Christ while there is time. For on that day those who are in Christ will not be subject to this kind of humiliation or condemnation. We who are trusting in the eternal sacrifice of Christ will be acquitted in the day of judgment. The books may be opened, but there will be nothing to read. The blood of our Savior will have blotted out all our sins.