

Nahum 1:1-8

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 May 2013

Preacher: Arthur Jackson

[0 : 00] Praise God for what has transpired already in our service. Looking forward to hearing from God even as I speak and trust that you are listening for the voice of God as well.

Let me pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for this day. Beautiful day it is. Being able to spend it with your people in your presence together.

May we hear. May we learn. May we live well. In Jesus name. Amen. Summer series we're in.

Taking us to both the book of Jonah as well as to the book of Nahum. Both focus on Nineveh. A great and powerful city of yesteryear in the ancient world.

It's interesting that on last week we saw a prophet with a message from God but he was running from God himself.

[1 : 04] This week we hear from another prophet. Roughly a hundred plus years on the other side of Jonah. His message was concerning the same city.

The city of Nineveh. And by way of introduction to the book on this morning I want us to look at three things. Matter of fact two of them you will actually find in verse one.

First thing we're going to look at is the message. The second thing that we're going to look at is the man. And in verses two through eight we're going to look at mighty God.

Or really the almighty God. And I hope that we will land with some meaning for today as it relates to what this text has to say to us.

And what it means for us on this morning. The book has a very short runway doesn't it? Look at that. Thirteen words and we're in.

[2 : 07] Even less than that. More compact than that in the Hebrew. An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh.

Very little introduction. Immediately we're connected with both a place as well as a person. Again 13 words in the ESV introduce the message and the man.

What about the message? The message is actually a pronouncement of doom for the city of Nineveh.

That's what it is. That's the message. And we're going to hear that over and over again. We're going to see that with the various word pictures that are given in the book.

It is a message of doom as it relates to a great city of yesteryear. And it concerns Nineveh. You see that there?

[3 : 09] An oracle concerning Nineveh. What then was an oracle? It is a weighty kind of message that needed to be lifted up by the voice.

And particularly in the context where a prophet is speaking an oracle. It is usually against a foreign nation. And as here that particular word refers to a message.

A message of doom. A message particularly that judgment is on the way. Nineveh. That great city of the Assyrian Empire.

The capital city was marked for doom. For centuries the Assyrians had been a force to be reckoned with in the Near East. Roughly 75 years prior to our time of writing.

The Assyrians had carried off Israel, the northern kingdom, into captivity. And God's people here at the time of writing. They were feeling the pressure from that same enemy force, if you will.

[4 : 18] The dominant superpower of that day. There was a reason then for this word of judgment from the Lord. But the sovereign Lord of history had raised up the Assyrians as a scourge against the nations.

And those nations included his own people, Israel, northern kingdom, and Judah in the southern kingdom. We see their dominance.

And I want you to look with me at Isaiah chapter 10. Because that helps to give us a little background to what God was doing in and through the Assyrian nation.

Isaiah chapter 10. And I want to begin reading at verse 5. This gives us a little bit of the back story.

What was going on in that day. And again, how God was using Assyria as his own instrument of discipline. And again, to include his people.

[5 : 21] Look at verse 5. As a matter of fact, look at the header. You see it there? Judgment on arrogant Assyria. That's in the ESV if you have that version. Verse 5.

Ah, Assyria. The rod of my anger. The staff in their hands is my fury, the Lord says. Against a godless nation I send him.

And against the people of my wrath I command him. To take spoil and seize plunder. And to tread them down like the mire of the streets. But he does not so intend.

And his heart does not think so. But it is in his heart to destroy. So he is an instrument of God and he's not even aware of it. Huh? To destroy and to cut off nations.

Not a few. For he says, are not my commanders all kings? It's not Kalna like Kharkimish? And it's not Hamath like Arpad?

[6 : 22] It's not Samaria like Damascus? Again, these were some chief cities in the Near East. And my hand has searched to the kingdoms of the idols. Whose carved images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria.

And again, there's a sense in which the Assyrian is strutting his stuff a little bit. Huh? Shall not I do to Jerusalem and her idols as I've done to Samaria and her images?

When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem. What? He will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes.

Assyria. Superpower. Dominant force. In that day. Used of God. As a scourge for the nations to include his own people.

What characterized the Assyrian people? Elliot Johnson in the Bible Knowledge Commentary helps us to see the inhumanity of this particular group of people.

[7 : 30] Theirs was a culture that was cruel and ruthless, if you will. Sennacherib. 8th century Assyrian ruler.

In the annals of Assyria. Has written these very words. As far as it concerns taking people captive.

Listen to this cruelty. I cut their throats like lambs. I cut their precious lives as one cuts a string. Like the mighty waters of a storm.

I made the contents of their gutlets and entrails run down upon the whole earth. Their hands I cut off. Warfare. Assyrian.

Assyrian. Assyrian. Assyrian. Assyrian. Assyrian. Assyrian ruler. Closer to the time of our sitting. Spoke of a captured ruler in the following manner. I pierced his chin with my keen hand dagger.

[8 : 30] Through his jaw I passed a rope. Put a dog chain upon him. And made him occupy a kennel. That's the way they function.

That's the way they operated. And they were a scourge against God's people. Friends this was the back story.

So think about it. If you're among the people of God. And you're hearing this message of doom. Against one that is your enemy.

That could bring you a measure of comfort. And saying. Maybe God hasn't forgotten about us. Help indeed.

Is on the way. Huh? Things were about to change. As they're related to Nineveh. And friends. As we look in this entire book. There is no kind word about this nation.

[9 : 31] Here friends. Was a city on death roll. And there would be no stay. Of execution. For Assyria. Huh? The execution.

Of the city. Of the people. Of the Assyrians. It was on God's docket. If you will. Huh? Question for us this morning.

What causes a city. To be on a death roll. As it relates to. And from God's perspective.

Huh? To be marked for judgment. Is it the violence that Joan. Prayed about. This morning. Or perhaps it's the greed.

That grabs. Not simply. Those who occupy positions. Of political power. In downtown Chicago. But the greed. That grips your heart.

[10 : 29] And my heart. Is people who live in the neighborhoods. Of Chicago. Or is it failure. To care for the needy. Failure to exercise.

A heart of compassion. Perhaps it's not one. But maybe sometimes. Accumulate. An accumulation. Of these things. Or perhaps it's pride.

Or is it an ultimate rejection. Of the God. In whom we live. And move. And have our being. Huh? How many cities.

How many cities in our world. Might be. On God's death row. If you will. The message friends.

Of the book. It's a pronouncement. Of judgment. It's not pretty. It's a pronouncement. Of doom. And Nineveh.

[11 : 27] Was the mark. If you will. So much about. The message. What about the messenger. The man. Huh? We see his name there.

In verse one. Don't we. Naam. That's his name. Meaning comfort. Or consolation. He's an obscure person. From an obscure place.

There's no certainty. As to exactly where. Elkosh. It sounds like. A little town. In Wisconsin. Or somewhere. Huh? We don't know.

Exactly where it was. Some. See. Perhaps in Galilee. Capernaum. Some would say. That it. It was given. The prophet's name. And honor.

Perhaps. Or some see it. As in today's. Iraq. Hmm? Some see it. As being. Somewhere in Judah. After all.

[12 : 24] The southern kingdom. Was the one. Who received. This particular message. But. We really. Don't know. It's uncertain. As to where it was. What we do know.

Is that. We have a little known man. From a practically. Unknown place. And he got a call. To pronounce. God's judgment. On this. Superpower nation. Now. How's that? For the wisdom.

Of God. That confounds. The wisdom. Of this world. For God. Takes the foolish things. The things. That are not. To confound. The things.

That are. Why does he do that? That no flesh. Should glory. In his presence. Huh? He that glories. Let him not. The boast. Which man. Not boast.

In his riches. The wise man. In his wisdom. The powerful. In his might. What if you're going to boast. Boast in this. That you understand. That you know. The God of heaven.

[13 : 21] Huh? Unknown. Person. Relatively. Used of God. Huh? He's a true prophet. How do you know that? What he said.

Came to pass. Not only is he a true prophet. He is a poetic prophet. If you will. Huh? Not only.

He. Nahum is a master poet. If you will. Huh? In 47 verses. Friends. He takes us. From 21st century Chicago.

To the ancient near east. Using parallel phrases. And metaphor. And simile. On top of simile. To point. To the point. That you and I see.

Huh? And that you and I feel. Very hand. Heavy hand of God. On a city. That rejected him. And hopefully.

[14 : 19] Issues us. A caution. Within ourselves. That's something. That you. You really. Don't want to go there. Huh? Huh? But on the other hand. It brings comfort. To the people of God.

That know. That as we. As we. As was sung. Of. In. Of old. I'm so glad. That trouble. Don't last. Always. Always. Huh? Again.

As we see. And know. And understand. As we go through this. These are the things. Hopefully. That's the kind of impact. That would have. On your heart. In mine.

Huh? The message. In the man. In verse one. Huh? But in verses. Two. Through eight. You and I.

Come. Face to face. With almighty God. And that's the man. He's the main character. In the book. Huh? Here friends. Is what we have. Almighty God.

[15 : 16] Meets. Mighty city. Huh? And we see. What happens. When that. Takes place. Back in the 70s. Not. Too long. I believe. After the birth.

Of my daughter. Pam. Shirley and I. Took a trip. To Denver. Colorado. I don't know. If you've ever. Troubled. I 70. West. Headed to Denver. But there's a point.

Of all of a sudden. When you sort of. I don't know. If it's a curve. What? But. Whoa. The. You're faced. With the mountains. The rocky mountains. There. In all of their grandeur.

Huh? Their height. And their majesty. Their snow capped. Mountaintops. It really hits you. In a very. Stunning. Kind of way. And here.

Right out of verse. One. We turn. Into verse. Two. And there he is. Face to face. Face. With God. Mighty God.

[16 : 10] Face to face. With the mighty warrior. Who triumphs over. And destroys his enemies. And in doing so. He comforts. His. People.

In the process. Oh. Friends. Do you have a vision of God? Do you have a vision of God? That has a way of. Overshadowing. Whatever it is.

That's. Bearing down. On you. In your world. Huh? Do you see his grandeur? Do you see his majesty? Huh?

Do you see him in all of his glory? Huh? The. Bigness of God. Is able. I make. I did. So. Trump's. Our. Situations. May.

That be. Your vision of God. Huh? Uh. But look here. There's something about. This vision. Uh. The attributes of. Our God. Are great.

[17 : 05] And. And there are many. And we love to sing about. His omniscience. And his omnipotence. The fact that he's all powerful. Oh. How many songs. Is there about. The love of God.

And the mercy of God. And the grace of God. We could rattle on. On about them. Huh? We sing about. Those kind of. Divine attributes. Those. Divine characteristics.

If you will. But none of those things. Friends. Comes into. This particular frame. That we see. In verses. Two. Three. Eight. Now.

What we do have. It is rather. Hymn like. There's a lyrical quality. To what we see. But the focus. Is actually. Very sobering. Huh? Ben.

When was the last time. That we sang. About God. Being jealous. Avengeful. A wrathful. I know you probably. Could write one. Perhaps. For the series. Is that?

[17 : 58] Yeah. But these are the aspects. Friends. Of his character. That come into view. As we turn the corner. From verse one. In. To verse two.

Did you notice there? Look what it says. He's a jealous. The Lord is jealous. The Lord is avenging. The Lord takes vengeance. And on down. You'll see. A little milder.

The Lord is good. In verse seven. But again. Five times. It speaks about. The Lord. The Lord using his covenant name. The name that relates him to his people.

Huh? He's a jealous God. What does it mean? Basically. It means that he is zealous for what is his. What belongs to him. He has a zeal for his honor.

The honor that should be accorded. The sovereign God of creation and history. Huh? Huh? Does not Psalm 24 tell us that the earth is the Lord's? The fullness thereof the world and those who dwell therein?

[18 : 58] And therefore the psalmist says in another place. Let all the earth fear the Lord. All the earth. All. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

Huh? Give him the honor. Give him the credit that he's due. Huh? He is also zealous for the people with whom he is coveted to be their God. And as their God.

And this speaks to you and me. If you own Christ. If you belong to God through the person and work of this son. This means you friends. He longs for our allegiance. Huh? He's zealous for us to fulfill.

To allow him to fulfill the role of his God in your life and in mine. He's a covenant keeping. God is indicated by his covenant name that we see here. But here he is presented as one who is going toe to toe.

With the near eastern war machine of that day. Huh? Some see him here as a judge. But it's better probably to see him as the divine warrior.

[20 : 00] Huh? The God that does battle. Huh? That's how he's outfitted for battle. He's a force to be reckoned with.

The picture is one. Of one who hasn't gotten what he deserves. Respect. And fear.

And honor. He's a jealous God. But also did you notice that he's an avenging and wrathful God? Avenging or a related word mentioned three times in verse two.

He's an avenging and wrathful. He takes vengeance on his adversaries. He keeps wrath for his enemies. Huh? He's an avenging God. What does that mean?

He's one who punishes wrong. He makes wrongs right. He tips the scale. Those who oppose him, adversaries and enemies, they pay for it.

[21 : 03] He's the God who makes things right, friends. He avenges his honor. Eventually, those who violate his honor pay the price for it.

Eventually. Soon. Adversaries and enemies are right for God's vengeance. And friends, you don't want to be on the wrong side. You don't want to be on the opposing end of this God.

Such is his posture. And listen. This is his posture to those who want to do their own thing. Huh? A people who have gone their own way.

Folks who strayed from the God-ordered path. And as such, they become enemies of the Almighty, if you will. You say, well, what gives him his right?

Who left him in charge? Huh? What gives him the right to speak in this kind of manner? Well, let Scripture speak. Again, Psalm 100 gives us a universal call to worship.

[22 : 11] Huh? Huh? Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all the earth. And verse 3 says, know that the Lord, he is God. If he who had made us.

Huh? All of us. And not we ourselves. We are his people. And there's a sense in which the whole world is the sheep of his pasture because there's the sins and the fullness thereof.

He's jealous. He's vengeful and wrathful. Huh? But notice in verse 3, the Lord is slow to anger and great in power.

And the Lord will by no means clear the guilty. Now, understand. God's slowness is not to be misinterpreted as softness, if you will.

Huh? Huh? The guilty will get what's due them. Peter picks up on this idea of God being long-stemmed, long-suffering, long-gone anger, if you will.

[23 : 16] The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promises. Some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. That's his nature.

Huh? Huh? This picture of God. He's almighty. So, first of all, we see his nature, who he is.

But secondly, if his nature comes into view in verses 2 and 3, the first part of 3, in the last part of 3 and through verse 5, it is his mastery that is being displayed, and particularly it's being displayed in natural order.

Do you see that there? Beginning in the last part of 3? His way is in the whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry.

He dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither, and the boom of Lebanon withers. The mountains quake before him. The hills melt. The earth heaves before him.

[24 : 18] The world and all who dwell in it. Huh? Notice what it's saying about it. Huh? His mastery. This is another way of saying this is how the Lord rose, if you will. He is unfazed by wind and storm.

Huh? Storms don't stop him. He's the Lord over it. He's the Lord in the midst of it. As a matter of fact, the clouds are but the dust of his feet. Huh? Huh? Speaking poetically.

Wind and rain and storm and cloud. He's master over them all. Huh? Didn't Jesus demonstrate that in the gospel? Speaking to the sea.

Peace be still. And the sea zips up its mouth and stops rolling. He's master. Huh? He's master over the waters in verse 4. As seen as authoritative acts over the Red Sea and over the Jordan River.

Drives him up so that his people might go through. Huh? His track record speaks of his power. Huh? Oh, not only that. Huh? He's not only God in the heavens and God over the sea, but he's God over the land.

[25 : 21] Huh? The lush and productive Bashan and Carmel and Lebanon with its strong and sturdy cedars. Huh? Known for them. He's Lord in the midst of it all.

But notice also he's master over the mountains and hills in verse 5. Huh? Did you notice the descending order there? Mountains and hills and then the earth.

Huh? He's master over it all. Huh? This speaks of divine dominance, if you will. Huh? Huh? Look what's happening here. Almighty Assyria.

Huh? You need to know a little something about Almighty God. Huh? Huh? In your... This is a sort of in-your-face kind of passage.

Huh? You need to see him. Huh? But notice the transition verse. A rhetorical question, isn't it? Who can stand before his indignation?

[26 : 18] Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken in pieces by him. Huh? Follows...

So this question follows this picture of the Almighty. Huh? Given the profile that's been... Already has come before, that includes nature, his nature in verses 2 and 3, and then the second part of 3 through 5, his mastery.

None can stand before his indignation. No one will be able to endure the heat of his anger. Again, this is the picture.

This is the implications of it. And then, so, after the question, it comes to probably what is the most well-known verse in Nahum.

Nahum 1 and 7. Remember, memorizing it. The Lord is good. The stronghold in the day of trouble. And he knows those who trust in him.

[27 : 19] That's in King James Version. And what a verse this is, huh? It's even more amazing, given the context. It's somewhat of a blip on the screen, but it's a powerful one.

And it's one that needs to be embraced and seen and owned, even here this morning. It's amazing context. It's a grand reminder, friends.

It's a beam of light in the midst of a very dark passage, huh? Character-wise. God is good. Have you experienced the goodness of God?

That gets right to the point. God does what is right. He is good. By nature, he is good.

I mean, and his actions flow out of that. To the very core, he is good. But not only, again, that speaks about his nature.

[28 : 18] And he's a stronghold. And he can be trusted in the worst of times. A stronghold, a fortified, strong place. A place of preservation, a place of safety and deliverance, huh?

It speaks of God's provision for those who trust him, huh? The place is symbolized today. Where is that strong place?

It's in a person. It's symbolized in the cross and all that that stands for. For it is there that God displayed his eternal goodness and love, giving his son.

And those who trust him are safe from his wrath. The wrath of God that is reserved for his enemies.

Those who are in the safe place in the person and work of his son are preserved from that, huh? Question. Have you entered that safe place?

[29 : 18] Have you entered that safe house, if you will? Have you entered, there was a lady at our old Pentecostal church, Mother Fuller. She's talking about she's in the safety zone.

Well, this is the safety zone, friends, huh? The safety zone is Christ himself. And those who find themselves there are preserved and protected from the very wrath of God in our day.

Yeah. The stability and the security. Verse seven is contrasted with what we see in verse eight, isn't it? Huh? But with overflowing flood, he will make a complete end.

Listen to you talking about terminator termination. And that's it. He will make a complete end of his adversaries and pursue his enemies into darkness.

Yeah. You see it there? It's contrasted. The stability and security of verse seven contrasted with what we see in verse eight. Huh? The faith of the Lord's adversaries and enemies, they will be overcome.

[30 : 32] Come. Huh? The dais cast. It's certain. Judgment was pronounced. Mighty city is going to meet almighty God.

Huh? And guess who's going to win? Nahum brings us face to face with the God who judges his enemies and saves those who trust in him.

Huh? The text here confronts us with some very penetrating and probing realities that our world, its regions, its cities, and the people in them, any of those domains need to know.

Huh? Here's one thing. Mighty cities are no match for almighty God. Huh? There is one mightier than the mightiest of all worldly powers.

Huh? Huh? The nations of the world have a way of going for bad. Don't they? Huh? I remember back in the 60s, before some of you were born.

[31 : 40] Huh? Nikita Khrushchev. We will crush you. Huh? Think of others. Think of the powers in Nazi Germany.

Huh? Went for bad. Huh? Huh? Huh? I mean, and these just picture the beastly nations of this world that boast.

Brag about armaments. Brag about their espionage and their programs and all of that. Huh? Huh?

What we see here in Nahum is a sneak preview. There's an eschatological kind of element to it because we see this repeated. We see it in Revelation. Where the beastly powers of the world overthrown by God.

We saw it in Daniel last year. Mighty nations are no match for almighty God. Huh? Huh? Huh? Huh?

[32 : 46] And therefore, be warned. Your city. The great cities of the world. No match. For almighty God.

Huh? You too may feel that you are all that. Huh? Huh? Huh? And those who feel that are ripe for wrath. When we get big and heads get big and swollen.

Huh? Right. For wrath. Huh? There's this Lord's. And he calls men and nations into account.

Ultimate accountability is not to the G8 or the G20 or how many ever nations that assemble. Ultimate accountability is to God and God alone.

Huh? And if you're living in rebellion, be warned this morning. Huh? Not only be warned, be aware that God has provided a safe place from his wrath.

[33 : 51] I've already mentioned it. It's in the person upon whom he has poured his wrath. Even on a cross, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, his son.

That's what the cross was about. Huh? There was the place where he bore our sins on a tree as a payment for our sins of rebellion against God.

High-handed rebellion. Huh? The master of our faith. The captain of our souls. The master of our sins. Not in any way. Safe places in a person.

That person is Jesus. If you find your refuge in him, in him alone, be comforted. Huh? Be consoled this morning.

Be assured that you are in the right place. You're in the safest place. The safest place in all the world. It's not a bomb shelter or a bunker. It's a person.

[34 : 53] That person is Jesus. Friends, know that our enemy, just like their Syrian, our ancient foe who seeks to work his war, woe his power and craft a great and armed with cruel hate.

Huh? Huh? He's ruthless. Huh? He's ruthless. Oh, and he will take you where you thought you'd never go and you'll do things you never thought you would do.

Be warned. Find refuge in him. Huh? Mighty man, meet almighty God. Huh? Huh? Righteousness exalts a nation's friend.

But sin is a reproach to any people. Know that this morning. Know it. Be warned.

And run to him for refuge. Father, we love you this morning. Oh, God, help us. Help us.

[36 : 01] Help us. You see us. You know us. May we not be rebel people. May we not take our cues from the power brokers of this world.

May we run for refuge. May we run to the place, the only safe place in this world. Oh, that's in your person of Jesus Christ, your son, who was born the very wrath of God for us.

Oh. And may all who find themselves in him. May they know that that is the best place. May they relish their relationship with you.

May they may we love you with all of our hearts, our minds, our souls. Be glorified in us, we pray. May we thank you for this message for a city and for all of those who live in it.

Blessed be your name. Amen. Amen. Let's stand together and sing our last song.