

Nahum 3:8-19

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[0:00] The scripture reading for today comes from Nahum chapter 3, verses 8 through 19, which can be found on page 783 if you grab one of the Bibles in the back.

Again, the scripture reading is Nahum chapter 3, verses 8 through 19. Please stand for the reading of God's Word.

Are you better than Thebes that sat by the Nile with water around her, her rampart a sea and her water a wall?

Cush was her strength, Egypt too, and that without limit. Putt and the Libyans were her helpers, yet she became in exile. She went into captivity.

Her infants were dashed in pieces at the head of every street. For her honored men lots were cast. For all her great men were bound in chains.

[1:16] You also will be drunken. You will go into hiding. You will seek a refuge from the enemy. All your fortresses are like fig trees with first ripe figs.

If shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater. Behold, your troops are women in your midst. The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies.

Fire has devoured your bars. Draw water for the siege. Strengthen your forts. Go into the clay. Tread the mortar. Take hold of the brick mold.

There will the fire devour you. The sword will cut you off. It will devour you like the locust. Multiply yourself like the locust.

Multiply like the grasshopper. You increased your merchants more than the stars of the heavens. The locust spreads its wings and flies away. Your princes are like grasshoppers.

[2:18] Your scribes like clouds of locusts settling on the fences in a day of cold. When the sun rises, they fly away. No one knows where they are.

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 will clap their hands over you.

For upon whom has not come your unceasing evil. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Good morning.

It's good to be with you again. It's been an interesting journey for the summer. Going through both the books of Jonah and Nahum.

[3:24] And in the process, I have gained yet another title. Bad cop. Dave has been the good cop for the summer.

Pastor Jay has been the bad cop. Well, if the message of Jonah has served to sober us, to sanctify us and to warn us as citizens of this city and of this world, to God be the glory.

That's our goal. That's our desire. Today's message is the last. Don't applaud. From the book on today.

And the first thing I want us to see is in verses 8 through 13. This is how I would describe that. If we would have a header for that particular session, it would be the certainty of the city's defeat.

The certainty of the city's defeat. And Nahum actually begins with an illustration of a defeated city.

[4:32] An illustration of a defeated city. And illustrations are really good. They help really to get across the point. They help us to see more clearly what may not be clear with the text or words themselves.

What's the point? What's the point in this particular illustration? It's this. That mighty, powerful, victorious cities and nations are not exempt from defeat.

Not exempt. You may be on the mountaintop. Don't get too comfortable there. Particularly if you're in rebellion against God.

You may feel that you're doing pretty well. Everything's in place. Family's good. Job's good.

Huh? Are you in rebellion? Watch out. Don't get too comfortable. Mountaintop today could be valley tomorrow or maybe even today if we're not careful.

[5:48] Huh? Not exempt from defeat. One's elite status is no guarantee of the same.

In the future. That was the warning. More than a warning. It really was the prediction that we'll see for Nineveh.

City that comes into view. See it there in verse 8. Are you better than Thebes? Ancient Thebes. In the Hebrew, No-Aman.

No-Aman. City of Amman. The supreme sun god. The deity there in Egypt. And what a city Thebes was. Capital of southern Egypt.

It was a great city, friends, in every sense of the word. Known as the first great city in the Orient. had long been the center of the Egyptian empire.

[6:49] It was a city with hundred gates. Testimonials to the city's greatness included its statutes, its memorials, its temples, great halls that were without equal in the ancient world.

Fantastic city. If it existed today, it would be one of the great cities of the world. One that you would want to get a flight to to see sometime.

But notice what it had to its credit. Favorable geography. That set by the Nile with water all around her, her rampart sea and water her wall.

Favorable geography. It was barricaded by water. One of the, I think, attractive features of our country that has served us well.

Barricaded on the east by the Atlantic. Barricaded on the west by the Pacific. Friendly neighbors to the north.

[7:58] Friendly neighbors to the south. Has really sort of kept us from what has really scarred and marked much in the world. Barricaded by water.

Principally, in Thebes, it was the Nile River. But also, there were canals and lakes and streams. Again, a very natural, geographical kind of defense for that particular city.

Located 400 miles from the Nile Delta. South. City was 27 miles in circumference. It was a great city and its geography was in its favor.

But did you notice also, not only was the geography in its favor, the neighboring alliances that she had with her neighbors were to her credit. She was well protected by her surrounding African brothers or neighbors.

In other words, the way we would put it today, Thebes had people, if you will. Cush was her strength. Egypt too, and that without limit, put, and the Libyans were her helpers.

[9:08] From all appearances, she was safe and secure, untouchable. Yet, in spite of everything that she had to her advantage, all of that changed in 663 B.C.

when Aserbanipal and the Assyrian army marched 1,300 miles on foot. Wow, what a journey.

To Thebes, enlisting various supports and coalitions along the way, and the city fell to the hands of the Assyrians.

And the cruelty of the Assyrians literally invaded that city. Look at verse 10. She became an exile, that is, Thebes did.

She went into captivity. And did you notice the cruelty that's there? The genocide that's there? Infants were dashed in pieces at the head of every street.

[10:15] What kind of fear would that engender if you saw that kind of thing going on in your streets? I mean, it's unthinkable.

But, again, the Assyrians were known for that kind of cruelty. And notice the range. Not only the infants, but it went all the way to the honored men taken away in chains.

The defeat and the humiliation of the thieves, this ancient, proud, powerful people, was no small deal. And it enters in as an illustration.

But we don't stop with the illustration, do we? There is an application for a marked city that we see in verses 13 through, I mean, 11 through 13.

Just as the mighty city thieves had been overthrown, such would be the throw, the case with Nineveh. Huh? You also will be drunken, you will go into hiding, you will seek a refuge from the enemy.

[11:23] Huh? Well, look at this picture that is being painted here. Huh? It is as if Nahum was the political illustrator of his day.

And what he writes and depicts is not really flattering at all. Quite the opposite. He mocks Nineveh with what would be known today as dark humor.

Huh? Political cartoonists, late night TV host, talk show hosts, they use it all the time. Huh? Serious matters are brought to light through humor or satire.

And these, and it's interesting that the writers or the late night hosts, they report actually what is happening. What Nahum was doing, he was speaking prophetically as far as what in fact was going to be, what was going to happen.

Take a look at what we see there in these verses. Huh? What you have here, I mean, this is quite the opposite to this proud people, the Assyrian people.

[12:31] Wow. It's not picturing them as a strong, virile, conquering people. He depicts them as very weak and helpless and vulnerable.

That's the picture that we see here. You see it there? Beginning in verse 11, you also will be drunken. That's not flattering, is it? You will go into hiding.

You will seek a refuge from the enemy. Huh? Think about an intoxicated, unstable, drunk person. They are useless. Huh? Rather than putting others to flight, here we have people on the run.

They're running, they're seeking refuge.

Huh? Again, this is the way that Nahum is casting this proud Assyrian people. Not only that, look at verse 12.

[13:28] All your fortresses are like fig trees with first ripe figs. If shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater. Huh? What he's talking about here, you've got weak, defensive, weak systems of defense.

Insecure people, a people, you might even say that they're ripe for picking, ripe for the taking.

Again, that's the picture that we see here. Oh, wow, look at this.

Your troops, huh? These who are supposed to be able to defend in battle, he's picturing them as soldiers without courage expected of those who go into battle.

Huh? Huh? Inadequate strength. They're good for domestic duties, but not very helpful for a battlefield. They are like women in your midst.

Huh? And rather than the gates keeping people out, the gates are wide open that allow the enemy to regain entry or to gain entry and the bars are destroyed by fire.

[14:31] Huh? The fall of Nineveh was as certain as the fall of Thebes, the powerful city, that Nineveh herself had defeated. Another taunt.

Inam. Huh? And what follows, it targets the very things that people tend to trust in today. Security systems, defenses, people resources, economic might, the best and the brightest of minds, the very things that cause people to say it can happen to them, but not me.

Huh? Not us. Not me because I'm wiser. I'm smarter. I'm wealthier. I'm better educated. I have a better pedigree than that.

Not me. I've got people. Huh? There are alliances in place that can help me out. I've got a posse to help me out when things go wrong. Things, systems, people that we rely on and we feel that will help to exempt us from ill and harm.

What are you trusting in that you feel makes you an exception? Huh? What are you standing on? What are you relying on?

[15:53] Huh? Think you can play by your own rules and win. We need to hear God's word and take a lesson from Nineveh and Assyria and other rogue, self-sufficient nations and people.

None of the things, none of these things would protect the ancient powerful city of Nineveh or the nation because of the best security systems is not safe, particularly when the adversary is the

almighty, the one who is working against us.

As a matter of fact, turn back over to Naom chapter 1 because that's how we entered the pages of this book. You've got this cameo, if you will, of the almighty.

And then, so basically, Naom let them know up front, hey, this is the God that you are dealing with. Look at verse 2 and just allow me to read a little bit just to get reacquainted with who it was that was the adversary of Nineveh.

The Lord, verse 2, is a jealous and avenging God. The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.

[17:11] The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, yes, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty. 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, the bloom of Lebanon withers, the mountains quake before him, the hills melt, the earth heaves before him, the world and all who dwell in it.

Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire and the rocks are broken in pieces by him.

This was the adversary of Assyria, if you will. Series of pronouncements in our text leaves the reader, the hearer, without question about the certainty of Nineveh or Assyria's fate.

She would not escape the judgment of God. The certainty of the city's defeat but also the futility of the city's resources.

[18:20] You see that in verses 14 through 19. I was really struck by this. we get an idea of what it looks like when a city is under judgment, judgment that can really be severe.

How do you know when the hand of God might be upon a city for ill? What kind of measurement, what kind of checklist might you use?

What might it look like? I think the text really helps us here. One of the things that we see in the text is the failure of efforts to protect the city.

How do you know that God's judgment might be reigning or ruling or at hand? The failure of efforts to protect the city. What we see here are human defensive efforts efforts but really they are of no real value.

People are trying. They are doing certain things. Certain things are in play but really it's not having the kind of results that one might think.

[19:40] As we look at verses 14 and 15 it's a mocking call to action. That's what it is. A mocking call to action that includes five different things.

Look what it says there beginning in verse 14. First thing draw the water for the siege. Second thing strengthen your force.

Third thing go into the clay. Fourth thing tread the mortar. The fifth thing take hold of the brick mold. Five particular things and just think about the hurry scurry kind of activity that might be going on here as far as the call.

It's a call to marshal the defenses for self protection and preservation. But really as if they were going to do you any good.

[20:39] The underlying thing is that none of these things will really prevail or avail. The elaborate water system would not be of ultimate value.

Nor would the efforts to repair or to strengthen the walls of the city or other defense systems as far as again busy hands trying to get things right for the protection of the city but would really not bring correction.

Rather than bringing correction it would get worse. Here's the idea. Shore up the economy. Fix the broken education system.

Fix the broken tax laws. Stop the crime. Let's put a little mortar here and a little mortar there and perhaps things will get better.

Hurry scurry but is all of this could all of this be signs how many I mean the politicians rally were trying to fix broke things and often when they get in there they break more things in the process.

[21:52] Hurry scurry kind of activities huh trying to make things better. So the question could these things or some of these things in fact be a sign of God's judgment somewhere something's wrong with the system let's fix it.

But are they working from the proper base because righteousness exalts a nation sin is a reproach to any people. I would hope that some of you here would be a part of what God would do perhaps in some city or municipality to go in with the very heart of God and justice and in fact be a part of the solution to some of these things.

But also as is all the hurry scurry activity doesn't have parallels in what we see here as far as not really availing marshalling the defenses would not do any good neither would the multiplication of numbers you see that there multiply yourselves like the locust multiply like the grasshopper and again it seems like Naam here is picking up on a couple of things the idea of increasing but then he brings in the locust and the grasshopper okay and as far as how they increase and again just seeing the massive!

and in that particular day in that particular area and even in some of those lands today the locusts and the grasshoppers are really destructive kind of forces they take what they want and then they leave they flee if you will so give it your best shot verse 16 they had the increase of merchants had the merchants increase like the locusts and the grasshoppers but now where are they they are fled verse 16 the locust spreads its wings and it goes away you've increased your merchants more than the stars of heaven economic and commercial failure that's what's in view here they're gone people of influence and economic clout come and get with but they're gone other influential people would also show their colors you see that in verse 17 the princes are like grasshoppers your scribes like the clouds of locusts again the idea here is that this administrative and leadership failure in the city it's what's in view slumbering leaders that would leave people vulnerable as you look around and see there that is what's in view as you look further in verse 18 your shepherds are asleep oh king of assyria your noble slumber your people are scattered on the mountains with none together then failure of people and systems is what's in view so we ask ourselves are we there yet perhaps we are and really don't know it unlike the leadership of Jesus in the gospels who saw people scattered as sheep and ministered to them at the point of their need here the

Assyrian leaders are cast as lethargic! and renegade in their responsibility to care for people who were under their care huh? boy it seems like this is a mark of what what Naom is showing us these are marks of a city's implosion if you will is this indeed what judgment looks like are these signs and tokens of judgment in cities and in nations that we may even see today I think it's a question that's worth asking look at verse 19 there's no easing of 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 huh?

[26:25] and Nineveh's wounds would be fatal a mortal wounding if you will from which she would not recover and guess what there would be no mourners we've already seen that in chapter 3 verse 7 rather there would be those who applauded her defeat huh?

what's the message from this particular text the best of man's efforts to escape the judgment of God are futile huh? it's foolish to think that rebellious people will escape the judgment of God what we have here the message here is akin to what the African American author James Wilden Johnson included in one of the sermons in a work called God's Trombones one of the sermons there is called the prodigal son and it includes the following line some of you may recognize it young man young man your arms too sharp to box with God huh?

those who box with the almighty you do not win as Nineveh huh? self-sufficiency pride and rebellion are foolish and for those who subscribe to such they are marked for God's judgment message is good for Nineveh America Russia China Chicago Ferguson Missouri your arm is too sharp to box with God you can't win don't oppose him surrender to him why?

because according to Psalm 33 the Lord brings the council of nations to nothing he frustrates the plans of the people but the council of the Lord stands forever the plans of his heart to all generations and blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord and the people whom he has chosen for his inheritance his heritage the salvation of God's people comes through the judgment of God's enemies that's the message of the book the salvation of God's people comes through the judgment of God's enemies for rebellious people and nations the obvious message of God's judgment is rather hard to hear even God's people sometimes would like to fast forward through the message of

judgment but underneath the fireworks of God's judgment there is a message of comfort for God's people of old and for people of faith today it's a message that really helps us to persevere in our cities and in our world where you have people against people and nation against nation kind of atrocities every single day it's comforting to know that God's justice will indeed prevail God's justice is going to prevail oh what a message it was for the people of Nahum's day to hear that this particular nation that has ransacked us and taxed us there's a day coming when God is going to deal with the enemies of God's people salvation for God's people comes through the judgment of God's enemies and their enemies and isn't that what the cross of Christ is all about God's judgment against the greatest enemy of all humanity sin that separates us from [30:35] God and it was there on the cross that through the judgment of Jesus Christ on the cross that you and I have life and that more abundantly!

Salvation for God's people comes through judgment the false security of the Assyrians was fatal whether it was natural fortifications alliances or insufficient they are insufficient to rescue from God's judgment and it's absolutely friends only those who find refuge in the Lord that are safe absolutely safe safe from the enemy of your soul sin and Satan and self huh for some trust in chariots summon horses but we will remember the name of the Lord our God we trust in him even the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior and we've learned through the gospel that out of Zion's hill huh our salvation has come Christ himself has come he has presented himself as the sacrifice for your sins and mine and in him we have life and that more abundantly yes we're living in a fallen crazy messed up world huh and one of these days one of these days judgment will fall on this world but it is only those who find refuge in him that are safe let's pray on this morning father thank you for your goodness to us in Christ and we bless and we honor him and Lord we love him and I pray Lord that none under the sound of my voice would rebel against you and if that is the status of their lives today I pray that they would turn in repentance and come to you for forgiveness and find that fully and freely in the person and the work of Jesus Christ our Lord we bless him we honor you and we give you the praise amen through