

Message #2

Nahum 1:1-5

In **verse 1**, we learn that this is “The oracle of Nineveh.” In the Hebrew Text or Greek Septuagint text, there is no article “the” at the beginning of the verse and it may be translated **“An oracle of Nineveh,” that will turn out to be “An oracle against Nineveh.”**

The word “oracle” is the Hebrew word “massa.” The word means to carry a burden or heavy load. When it is used of something proclaimed by a prophet the word means a heavy message to bear because it is a grievous and threatening message against someone (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 512).

So when the book opens, this is an oracle of Nineveh; it is not good news for Nineveh. This will be a very heavy, threatening and intimidating message. God does not only track down individuals, but He tracks down specific cities and nations.

In fact, this prophetic book of Nahum makes some specific predictions against Nineveh that we are actually able to literally track. Here are 13 very specific predictions of what God would do to Nineveh:

- 1) God would completely destroy and remove the city of Nineveh by a flood. 1:8; 2:6, 8
- 2) When God would destroy Nineveh, it would be a forever and final destruction. 1:9, 14c
- 3) When God would destroy Nineveh, many would be drunk in final hours. 1:10a; 3:11
- 4) When God would destroy Nineveh, much of it would be burned. 1:10b; 2:13; 3:13
- 5) When God would destroy Nineveh, the city would never be named again as key city. 1:14a
- 6) When God would destroy Nineveh, the idols would be completely destroyed. 1:14b
- 7) When God would destroy Nineveh, people would flee and try to escape. 2:8
- 8) When God would destroy Nineveh, it would be plundered and looted. 2:9
- 9) When God would destroy Nineveh, there would be a great slaughter and massacre. 3:3
- 10) When God would destroy Nineveh, all fortifications would be easily destroyed. 3:12
- 11) When God would destroy Nineveh, people would try to make bricks for protection. 3:14
- 12) When God would destroy Nineveh, the city gates would be burned. 3:13
- 13) When God would destroy Nineveh, their leaders would flee and not be found. 3:17

Now the oracle is aimed at Nineveh. We spent a great deal of time discussing Nineveh last time. Nineveh was the great, capital city of Assyria. The ruins of the city have been located by archeologists in Iraq. Somewhere around the year 1850, an English explorer by the name of A. H. Layard discovered Sennacherib’s palace in the city.

His palace covered five acres and had 71 rooms. It had two large halls 180 feet long and 40 feet wide. The materials he used for his palace were cedars, cypresses and the doors were banded with silver, copper, marble, and ivory.

The city was enclosed by eight miles of walls with 15 gates. It had gardens and parks and it was watered by a thirty mile long aqueduct (Stephen Miller, *Nahum*, p. 19).

The predictions that Nahum makes about what God would do to that city are amazing when one considers what the city was like when Nahum made these predictions. This was the most impressive city in the world and it was to this city that Nahum said, “I have a heavy message to give to you from God.”

You cannot help but think of political and powerful people who build their mansions and have their impressive wealth. They have not received it by being serious about God and His word. In fact, they achieved it by corrupt means. God comes to them in a book like Nahum and says I have a heavy message from God for you.

To further add weight to this, the text says that this book is a “vision of Nahum.” What this means is that this is a revelatory vision Nahum received. **The word means that Nahum actually saw this.** So what he describes in this book he actually saw concerning Nineveh.

The fact that he was from “Elkosh” means we don’t exactly know where he was from. We suspect that he was born in Capernaum; lived in south Judah and was buried in Iraq, but we don’t know for sure. What we do know for sure is exactly what Nahum saw.

As he begins his oracle, what he says is this:

GOD IS A SOVEREIGN GOD WHO IS JEALOUS FOR HIS PEOPLE AND HE IS AN AVENGING GOD TO THOSE WHO DO THINGS AGAINST HIS PEOPLE AND HE HAS SOVEREIGN POWER OVER EVERYTHING TO DESTROY PLACES AND PEOPLE.

Now you may think does God really do this kind of thing. Does he really target a city or power or leader and destroy them? As you will see, he did do this to Nineveh. But let’s give another illustration. When Jesus Christ was here on earth, He said because of what they had done to Him, God would completely destroy Jerusalem. It was a magnificent city standing in all of its glory. Thirty-seven years after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, Titus came into Jerusalem with his Roman army and poured out, as one commentator said, “one of the greatest horrors ever witnessed on earth.” He leveled the city. He looted the city. He burned the city and he slaughtered one million people. Yes, God does do this kind of thing.

Now as Nahum opens the book, he begins by focusing on the sovereign power and greatness of God. That is how the book opens. Nahum wanted God’s people and Nineveh to know what kind of God is involved in this. He wanted all to know about the character and the power of God.

There are a series of 18 opening facts that are potent that Nahum wants all to see and know:

FACT #1 – God is the LORD. 1:2a

In the O.T. there are three main proper nouns used for God:

- 1) LORD - Jehovah, the sovereign covenant God of Israel.
- 2) Lord - Adonai, the sovereign controller of everything.
- 3) God - Elohim, the Triune sovereign mighty creator of all things.

In this book of Nahum, he uses two names for God:

- 1) He uses the name “LORD” (Jehvoah) 13 times (vrs. 1:2, 2, 2, 3, 3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14; 2:2, 13; 3:5)
- 2) He uses the name “God” (El) one time (1:2).

It is very clear from this that Nahum wants Nineveh to know that the warning and heavy message I am giving you is coming from the covenant God of Israel who is sovereign over everything.

What corrupt leaders and powers need to know is that you are tampering with the covenant people of God and it will not go well for you if you despise them or demean them.

According to Hebrews, we who believe in Jesus Christ are also in a covenant relationship with God. Those who do negative things against us need to know Almighty God will repay those who have made life difficult for us.

FACT #2 – The LORD God is jealous. 1:2b

There is a sinful, evil side to jealousy and there is a godly, righteous side to jealousy. God has a righteous, godly jealousy for His people. The jealousy side of God does bring glory to God.

This is not some petty envy or jealousy that is sinful. **God is not jealous of us, He is jealous for us.** God is the creator and owner of everything, so there is no possibility of Him being jealous like humans are jealous.

This is a Divine jealousy that is protective of His people. **It is a wonderful blessing when God is jealous for you; but it is a terrifying proposition when God is jealous against you.**

FACT #3 – The LORD God is avenging. 1:2c

Make no mistake about this; God is a God of vengeance. When He decides to pour out His vengeance, people die. When Jonah was mad that God had not poured it out on Nineveh about 100 years before Nahum, God told him that had He poured out vengeance there would have been more than 120,000 children killed plus that many animals. The vengeance of God is nothing to take lightly.

God is an avenging God and that fact is mentioned three times in this verse for emphasis. The word is “noqem” and it is one that means God will avenge Himself and His people and pay back the things that have been done against Him and His people. He will pay back the full price and pour out full retributive justice.

There have been people who have mocked those committed to God and His word. There have been people on TV and those in positions of power who have made fun of Christians. They have made mockery of Biblical decency and godliness. Nahum says you need to know God is an avenging God. He is a payback God and His vengeance will target you and destroy you.

FACT #4 – The LORD God targets His vengeance on His adversaries. **1:2d**

The word “adversary” (sar) refers to those who were hostile to God and His word and His people. This will be the target of God’s vengeance. He will target cities and individuals. What God says He will do is take retributive justice out on those who were His adversaries.

No person or power or city or nation can fight against God and win. If one is hostile to God and His word, he is the target of God’s vengeance and it is just a matter of time until God will pour it out on him.

FACT #5 – The LORD God stores wrath for enemies. **1:2e**

The word “enemy” (oyeb) refers to one God views as being His personal enemy and the enemy of His people. God has a list of personal enemies against Him and His people.

God “reserves” wrath which means He does not pour it out immediately. He keeps it in reserve until the time He decides to act. The word “wrath” means God’s anger burns and is hot.

We cannot help but think of what Paul wrote in Romans 2:5 when he said that people who refuse to believe in Jesus Christ are actually in the process of “storing up wrath for yourself.” That is exactly what God says here.

God’s enemies have an account and they store up wrath. This is true for individuals, cities and nations and once the wrath has reached the level God has determined, He will pour it out on them.

FACT #6 – The LORD is slow to anger. **1:3a**

Adversaries and enemies need to know this; God is a God who does not immediately pour out His wrath vengeance. He will do that in His time, which is a long time.

God’s anger is very calculated and very controlled. It is not some random or quick act. But here is what people need to know. Once God pulls one of His weapons out of the scabbard, He will not put it back in until He has poured out His vengeance.

This is why enemies think they are getting away with things. This is why leaders and powers think they are getting away with their corruption and their idolatry and their immorality. They think they are on top of the world and can do what they want. What they don't realize is that God's character does not instantly avenge the wrong and the evil, but He will do it. God says all people need to know this about Me; I am very slow to get angry, but once I do I will avenge the wrong.

FACT #7 – The LORD is great in power. **1:3b**

Just because God in His grace and mercy is slow to pour out His anger and wrath, does not mean He does not have the power to do it and it does not mean He won't do it. In fact, most do not realize the Omnipotent power God has. Most do not realize how much power belongs to Him.

He will mention some things from creation in just a moment but before he brings out one more key point:

FACT #8 – The LORD will never leave the guilty unpunished. **1:3c**

Do not overlook these words; God will not ever leave the guilty unpunished. **God will never let a guilty person go free.** He will not let them off the hook. They will not get away with what they did.

God will not just forget about evil that was done. God will not just let the people who did the evil escape His anger. He is slow to anger, but He eventually does anger and when He does, He pays back in ferocious judgment.

FACT #9 – The LORD sovereignly controls whirlwinds and storms. **1:3d**

Don't miss what Nahum says here, God's power controls what happens in the air. My power controls tornadoes, hurricanes and storms. I use these things as weapons to carry out My will and My vengeance.

These are two very powerful and very destructive things God can use. Dealing with a city like Nineveh or Washington D.C. is nothing for God, since He has all this power.

FACT #10 – The LORD controls the clouds. **1:3e**

Nahum says God's power controls what happens with the clouds and the rain. He can send drought or He can send howling winds and torrential downpours. Can God use the clouds and the rain to pour out judgment? Ask Noah and his family. For 40 straight days and 40 straight nights God poured rain on the earth as a judgment (Gen. 7:12).

FACT #11 – The LORD commands the sea to dry up. **1:4a**

Nahum says God’s power controls all water in the oceans. He literally did that for Israel when He brought them out of Egypt and He did it again when He led Israel into the Promised Land.

We also learn from Revelation that in the ultimate display of God’s wrath, He will use the seas to carry out some of the Tribulation judgments (Rev. 8:9; 16:3).

FACT #12 – The LORD commands the rivers to dry up. **1:4b**

Nahum says God’s power controls all water in the rivers. Now it is specifically predicted that God would use rivers to flood and destroy Nineveh (1:8; 2:6, 8). The Greek historian Diodorus in 20 BC wrote that when Nineveh was being destroyed, heavy rains from the river flooded the city and started breaking down the walls (*Bibliotheca Historica*, 2, 26; 9:2, 27, 13). Xenophon, the Greek historian 430 BC, said that when Nineveh was being destroyed, there was “terrifying thunder” (*Anabasis* 3, 4, 12). So God did literally use storms and rivers to destroy Nineveh.

Today the “Tigris River” is drying up and the water that is in the river is now so polluted that people risk death. Not only that but its sister river the Euphrates is also drying up. We know in the Tribulation, God is going to use rivers to kill people (Revelation 8:10-11; 16:4-5)

FACT #13 – The LORD commands plush land to wither. **1:4c**

Nahum says God’s power controls what happens in the land. Nahum mentions Bashan modern day Syria to the north east and Carmel which is the coastal Mediterranean region in the south west and Lebanon which is the region that runs west coast of the Mediterranean.

God says I control every inch of that Promised Land and I will cause it to wither.

In the Great Tribulation God is going to pour out His judgment on land and not just wither it but burn it up (Rev. 8:7).

FACT #14 – The LORD commands the trees to wither. **1:4d**

Nahum says God’s power controls what happens with the trees. The cedar trees of Lebanon were known for lush forests and great wood. God says I’ll use My trees in carrying out My judgments. In Revelation 8:7 God will burn up 1/3rd of all the trees.

FACT #15 – The LORD shakes the mountains. **1:5a**

Nahum says God’s power works in the mountains. Now much of what Nahum is seeing will take place in the Great Tribulation in full magnitude. People will literally see mountains moved. No matter how big the mountain, God can shake it and does shake it and God can move it (Rev. 6:14-16).

FACT #16 – The LORD dissolves the hills. **1:5b**

Nahum says God's power works in the hills. God makes it clear that He can move mountains and hills and He can make them disappear (Rev. 16:20).

FACT #17 – The LORD upheaves the earth. **1:5c**

Nahum says God's power works in earthquakes. It is predicted that near the finale of the Great Tribulation, God will send the most devastating earthquake that has ever existed since man has been living on this earth (Revelation 16:18).

FACT #18 – The LORD judges the world and all in it. **1:5d**

Do you see what Nahum is doing here? He is saying you people of God and you people who tamper with the people of God need to know what kind of God you are up against.

If this God of the Bible is against you, you had better be terrified because He will come after you in ways worse than what you can imagine.

God will not let the guilty go free. He reserves wrath and those who refuse to believe in Jesus Christ are storing up wrath for an avenging God.

There is only One who can rid you of your sin and guilt. It is Jesus Christ. Believe on Him and you will have a Jealous God looking out for you.