

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY SERIES

NAHUM

By Pastor Ray Viola

Dear Saints in Christ Jesus,

These notes were taken from our Old and New Testament Bible surveys at Koinonia on Wednesday and Sunday evenings. The intention was to give an overview of the entire Bible and see how the two testaments “connect.” Within the notes, practical truths were brought out because we know that the study of Scripture without application is like a vehicle without gas...going nowhere.

If the Holy Spirit can use these simply truths to draw you closer to Jesus Christ and develop a more mature love of God the Father, then this booklet will have accomplished its task.

May the blessing of God be shed upon you as you receive, with meekness, His engrafted Word.

Selah,

Pastor Ray

* Portions of these notes were downloaded from Quick Verse and Online Bible Study notes.

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NAHUM

The theme of the book of Nahum is that Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrian Empire, will be destroyed. Almost every verse from **1:15-3:19** describes that event, which took place in 612 B.C. The Ninevites (Assyrians), repented through the preaching of Jonah (more than one hundred years before Nahum wrote), but the people had slowly reverted to their cruel and heathen practices.

Chapter 1

- 1:1** When the word “burden” is used, it describes a message which is heavy upon the heart of God which He places upon the heart of His messenger, which of course in this case is Nahum. Nothing is known of Nahum (whose name means “consolation or comfort”) except that he came from Elkosh, which was possibly Capernaum, for the name Capernaum can also mean, “the village of Nahum.” Nahum’s message against Nineveh was given to Judah, since the Northern Kingdom, Israel, had already been taken captive. This message of judgement upon the cruel Ninevites (Assyrians) would be a word of great comfort for God’s people.
1. Let’s not forget that God’s love for the Ninevites was demonstrated when He sent Jonah to deliver to them a message of repentance. However, their repentance, if you can call it that, was only transitory. Judgment was inevitable.

The Attributes of God, 1:2-8

- 1:2** “**God is jealous**”. Webster defines jealous here as, “exacting exclusive devotion.”
- Ex 20:5** You shall not bow down to them, nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God...
- Ex 34:14** for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God...
1. God is jealous of you because He loves you. Thus, when you and I give ourselves to the things of this world, He becomes jealous.
 2. Remember how Jesus wrote to the church at Ephesus about them leaving their first love? They were falling in love with “church”, or “ministry”, but falling away from intimacy with Him.

The Lord is a God of vengeance who reserves His wrath for His enemies.

Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,” says the Lord.

:20 Therefore if your enemy hunger, feed him; if he is thirsty, give

him drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.

:21 Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

1. Rarely, if ever, can mortal man exercise vengeance with a heart that represents the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord “is furious”. This fury of God is in relation to His hatred of sin.

Lev 26:28 then I will walk contrary to you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.

1. God doesn't wink at sin. It grieves Him. It offends His holiness. It destroys us.

- 1:3** The Lord is slow to anger. The “revival” after the days of Jonah had stopped. It was “Nineveh as usual” again. So, it could be that for up to 100 years, the Lord was sending again to the Ninevites this message of repentance with the warning of judgment . He gave them space to repent!

This attribute of God (longsuffering) is oftentimes mistaken as approval or ignorance of sin. Not true!

Ecc 8:11 Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

1. This attribute reveals how God gives to mankind time and opportunities to repent. (**2 Pet 3:9**). God gave the people in the days of Noah 120 years to repent before the Flood judgment. His judgements are never rash.

- 1:4** We saw Jesus demonstrate this very same power of Deity at the Sea of Galilee (**Matt 8:26**). Bashan was known for its lush pastures (**Amos 4:1**), Carmel for its vineyards (**Amos 1:2**), and Lebanon for its choice trees (**Ezek. 31:16**).

- 1:5** “The mountains quake before Him”. Earthquakes and volcanoes are pictures of creation groaning due to the judgment of God. This is consistent throughout the Scriptures.

- 1:6** “Who can stand before His indignation?” No one! Sennacherib's commander had challenged the power of Hezekiah's God (**2 Kings 18:35**) to his downfall (**2 Kings 19:35**)! If the omnipotent God can so manipulate the forces of nature (v. 5), how can puny man expect to withstand His indignation?

In Revelation 6:17, this same question is asked.

Rev 6:17 For the great day of His wrath has come; and who is able to stand?

1. The answer to that question was answered in the very next chapter

when John writes about the 144,000 that were sealed by God, thus able to stand in the time of judgment.

2. In **Eph 1:13,14** we see that every single person that trusts in Jesus Christ's finished work of atonement on their behalf on Calvary is sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.
3. So, the question of who withstands the wrath of God can only be answered by "those who are sealed with the Holy Spirit".

1:7 What a wonderful verse! This verse reveals a Kingdom of heaven fact of life – "**The LORD is good.**"

Psalm 34:8 O taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

Psalm 100:5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.

Psalm 135:3 Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good; sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant.

Lam 3:25 The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.

The Lord is a Stronghold, a place of refuge and protection.

Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

"He knows those that trust (confide, have hope) in Him."

2 Tim 2:19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His".

In other words, you may very easily get lost amidst the 6 billion people on the planet, or at the church, but Jesus knows who you are (**Psalm 139**), where you live. He knows His sheep. (**John 10:14**) Continue to "trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean upon your own understanding." (**Prov 3:5**)

1:8 **The "overrunning flood"** symbolizes an invading army that overruns a land and destroys everything and everyone in its path. The Greek historian Ctesias recorded that the Babylonian army was able to invade Nineveh when the Tigris River suddenly overflowed and washed away the floodgates of the city. So both nature and symbolism describe this destruction of Nineveh.

How sad that when a person rejects God, who is light (**John 8:12**) the only alternative for them is to embrace darkness. They end up reaping what they have sown (**Gal 6:7**) and darkness pursues them! Jesus spoke of the darkness of the lost eternity.

Matt 22:11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who did not have on a wedding garment.

:12 And he said to him, "Friend, how do you come in here without a wedding garment?" And he was speechless.

:13 Then said the king to the servants, “Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matt 25:30 And cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Contrast this with the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ:

John 12:46 “I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.”

1:9 To imagine, or conspire, means to plan. The idea is that God’s judgment of Nineveh would be so complete that He would not need to do it a second time.

The depravity of man is no more highlighted than in the deluded thought that we can challenge God’s authority and come out as winners.

Psalm 2:1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

:2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against His Anointed, saying,

:3 “Let us break Their bonds in pieces, and cast away Their cords from us.”

:4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall hold them in derision.

1:10 According to history, what made the Assyrian army easier to overcome was the fact that they were in the midst of their partying when the capital came under attack.

Prov 20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is deceived by it is not wise.

Note that the effects of the wine turned out to be a reason why the Assyrians were defeated.

1:11 The verse is a reference to the wicked counselor Rabshakeh who was sent against Jerusalem on behalf of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. (See the story in **2 Kings 19**.)

1:12 “**Though they are complete**”, or literally, “at full strength” means that in spite of Assyria’s mighty army, they would be made powerless in their attempts to invade Jerusalem. In fact, the Assyrian king, with 185,000 of his men slain in one night, ended the siege of Jerusalem and retired to Nineveh. (**2 Kings 19:35,36 & Isaiah 37:36,37**)

1:13 The Lord had sovereignly used the Assyrians as a tool of judgment against His rebellious people. Now God declares that He is going to lift their yoke and burst their bonds.
When a person turns to Christ and is born again, He tailors for each saint

a yoke that bears His Name. It's not a yoke of bondage, but a yoke of joy and peace. (**Matt 11:29,30**)

- 1:14** The house of Sennacherib's gods would witness his death.
2 Kings 19:36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.
:37 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword...
Nahum prophesied that the dynasty of Sennacherib would come to an end., and this was fulfilled when Sennacherib's great grandson Saracus committed suicide in the last days of the Assyrian Empire.
Their graven images were to be cut off.
Note that historically and humanly it was the Medes and Babylonians that demolished the idols of the Assyrians, but the Lord here declares that He would be the One that performed this task.
- 1:15** Here is a promise of Judah's deliverance, as well as a prophecy of the ultimate deliverance of man through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
Isaiah 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things...

Chapter 2

In this study we will once again draw spiritual principles from this ancient battle. Whenever we are reading Scriptures that just do not seem to be relevant to our lives, such as this chapter in **Nahum**, a couple of Scriptures to remember are:

2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

:17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Hosea 12:10 I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets.

1. In other words, these verses can form pictures or show types that apply to the Christian walk as revealed in the New Testament.

- 2:1** "He who dashes in pieces" refers to Cyaxares the Mede and Nabopolassar the Babylonian, who conquered Nineveh. The prophet's call to Nineveh to defend itself would not alter the outcome of the battle because God had already decreed that Nineveh would be destroyed.

This gives a picture of the need for being prepared for the battles against powers, rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places. (**Eph 6:12**) We have been clearly told in Scripture about the reality of spiritual warfare. The Lord supplies all that we need to walk under the shadow of His wings in the midst of enemy attack. No level of holiness will ever cause the warfare to stop. (**Matt 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13**)

- 2:2** Judah is viewed as God's heritage (vine branches) whom Assyria had plundered. The fruit that they were intended to bring forth has been marred (spoiled).
The Lord at times will use the unsaved to be a rod of correction against His children when they rebel against His holy call and purposes. The reason for this chastening by the Lord is found in the words, "The excellence of..." The Hebrew for excellence (ga'own, gaw'ohn'), can also be translated "arrogance, excellency (-lent), majesty, pomp, pride, proud, swelling".
1. What a horrible thing pride is. It is "the mind of Lucifer." It always results in destruction. It always causes contention and division. It always seeks the glory that belongs to God, and is always selfish. It's never teachable.
 2. When pride creeps into the lives of God's children, count on His chastening hand to deal with that issue directly, lovingly.
- 2:3** The "his" here refers to the attacking armies of the Medes and Babylonians. The Medes and Babylonians made their shields red by painting them or overlaying them with copper (**Ezek 23:14**). Their tunics were scarlet; their chariots flashed with steel (flaming torches) because they attached scythes (long curving blades) at right angles to the axles. They also used fir trees to make their spears.
- 2:5** Inside the besieged city, the officers (the nobles) rush to the wall. The Assyrians will seek by all means to gather their power, but all things will fail them. On arrival to the walls, they see that their enemy is preparing the battering ram under cover of "the defense".
What was the root cause of the Assyrian (Ninevites) destruction?
They had turned from the place of repentance towards God, to one of living according to their former lusts and idolatry.
What were some of the manifestations of this falling away from God's mercy and truth?
Pride and self confidence were two big ones. The Assyrians were once the mightiest and most feared army on the face of the earth. Their pride blinded them from seeing how they had slowly fallen from that mighty condition. Resting upon their past victories, they became careless and negligent militarily.

Remember God's warning to self confident Edom?

Obadiah 3 The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground?"

Remember Paul's warning to the self confident Corinthians?

1 Cor 10.12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

One of the reasons why the last days will be so perilous is because mankind will be proud.

2 Tim 3.2 "for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy...

Both James and Peter cite **Prov 3:34** in confirming that "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (**James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5**)

2:6 This refers to the flood gates controlling the Khoser river, which flowed through the city. Closed at the beginning of the siege, they backed up the water into reservoirs which, when opened, released a flood of water that destroyed the palace.

1. The Babylonian Chronicle tells that Nineveh fell because the flooding rivers made breaches in the city's defenses.

Our God knows every single detail about events before they happen.

Isaiah 46:9 Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me,

:10 declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure."

2:7 The empire of Assyria is represented as a queen, about to be led captive to Babylon.

Ironically, the last Queen mentioned in Scripture is Mystery Babylon. Listen to her indictment:

Rev 18:7 As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, in like measure give her torment and sorrow, for she says in her heart, "I sit as queen, and am no widow, and shall not see sorrow."

:8 Therefore her plagues will come in one day, death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

2:8 A prophecy of how the Assyrians would flatter themselves and say that Nineveh was so ancient that it could never perish. They were presuming on their past history as protection from their present dangers.

Psalms 12:3 the LORD (will) cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue

that speaks proud things...

2:9 There was much looting in Nineveh because Assyria had plundered other countries she had captured. God commands the enemies to spoil Nineveh, and promises them infinite riches and treasures.

2:11-12 Assyria is pictured as a lion soon to be captured (**v.11**), though once fierce in conquest (**v.12**). The illustration is particularly appropriate since lions in various forms are found on Assyrian sculptures. The ferocious Assyrians, pictured as a devouring lion, reminds us of the devil who "prowls around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (**1 Peter 5:8**)

Jesus defeated the devil on Calvary's cross.

Col 2:15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

1. The accuser of Christ's children has no "legal" basis of accusation against us, because Jesus wiped out every sin debt! "Paid in Full" was Jesus' victory cry (**John 19:30**).
2. Our position in Christ enables us to stand against the devil's wiles (**Eph 6:10,11**), and walk in His victory by the Spirit of God every day (**Gal 5:16,25**).

2:13 Those are not worthy to be heard again who have spoken reproachfully of God.

Chapter 3

3:1 **The bloody city** — Nineveh was known for its many cruel atrocities committed against those she conquered; e.g., amputating parts of bodies, impaling, beheading, burning, and piling up corpses.

The prey departs not. Assyria lived by plundering others.

The Biblical principle of reaping what you sow (**Gal 6:7,8**) certainly applies to what happened to the Ninevites.

Note that God mentions here how the very government was full of lies and robbery. If a part of the reason why the Living God judged these nations in Scripture was for lies and robbery, how can we or any other nation expect to avert the judgment of God for doing the very same things?

3:2 **The noise of a whip** speaks to the urging on of the horses of the Babylonians, God's instrument of judgment .
As we alluded to in chapter 2, the warfare of the believer in this world is every bit as real as that recorded here. Our primary enemy is not a physical one, but he is indeed a literal one ("your adversary, the devil" - **1 Peter 5:8**).

3:3 **They stumble over the corpses.** The very night that Nineveh was destroyed, an angel of the Lord went out to the camp of the Assyrians and killed 185,000 soldiers. “And when people arose early in the morning, these were all dead bodies.” (**Isaiah 37:36**)

3:4 Nineveh, “mistress of deadly charms” (or “sorceries”), enticed the nations with her beauty, then taught them all to worship her false gods.
1. The mention of witchcraft suggests the use of demonic means to ensnare nations.

The world of the occult is very much alive and well in our civilization.

It has been very active in the White House (e.g., consulting the ghost of Eleanor Roosevelt). Our college and high school campuses are infected with atheistic kinds of “good luck charms”. The New Age Movement and all of it’s trafficking in “ancient spirits” and “higher powers” is very popular today. There are psychic hotlines, fortune telling, horoscopes. Many people have written books and packed out auditoriums to speak about their “out of the body”, supernatural experiences.

If it is supernatural but not Scriptural, it is not of the Lord!

God calls Nineveh “the seductive harlot”. Remember what James wrote in his epistle?

James 4:4 You adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

1 John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

:17 And the world is passing away, and the lust thereof; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

1. In the Book of Revelation the Lord reveals a great worldwide religious system that is called “the great whore” (**Rev 17:1-6**). The church is called to be a chaste virgin to Christ.

3:5 **“Behold, I am against you”.** When the Lord shows Himself against a people, everything they trust in must fail, or prove a disadvantage. However, He is a stronghold for every believer in time of trouble (**Psalms 9:9**), that cannot be stormed or taken; and He knows those that trust in Him (**Nahum 1:7**).
How thankful we can be today for the gospel of Jesus Christ! “If (or Since) God is for us, who can be against us?” (**Rom 8:31**) Listen to what David wrote years ago, but it is as true today as it was then:

Psalm 124:1 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say,

:2 “If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us,

:3 then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their wrath was kindled against us;”

3:6 In other words, the Lord says here, “I will cover you with filth and show the world how really vile you are.”
“Your sin will find you out”, testified Moses in **Numbers 32:23**. “Secret” sin on earth is an open scandal in heaven.

3:7 Nobody is going to mourn over the city when it is destroyed.

3:8 **No-amon was ancient Thebes**, the capital of Upper Egypt. Thebes was a great city which seemed impregnable, but it was sacked by the Assyrians in 663 B.C. and destroyed. The name “No Amon” in Egyptian meant “City of (the god) Amun”, whose image was a human body with a ram’s head. This too was a city steeped in the occult. It is now known as Luxor, and is located about 400 miles south of Cairo.

Like Nineveh, Thebes was situated on a river; in this case, it was the Nile.

1. Nahum used this as a warning to the Ninevites that even the great can fall.

2. When proud sinners are brought down, others should learn not to lift themselves up. As Matt Henry said...we can only stand as we abide in the strength of God’s saving, sanctifying, and sustaining grace.

2 Tim 2:1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

3:9 No-amon was much better off than Nineveh because the Egyptian capital had powerful alliances, whereas the Ninevites alienated all their neighbors because of their cruel and barbarous treatment.

3:10 What the Assyrians did to the Thebians would soon happen to them. They were going to receive what they gave out.

Gal 6:7 Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that will he also reap.

:8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

3:11 **You also will be drunken**; i.e., with the wrath of God in judgment. **you will be hidden**. Even the site of Nineveh was hidden until its discovery in 1842.

3:12 None of her fortifications helped her withstand the onslaughts of the

enemy. The ripe fig is easily gathered and offers no resistance.

- 3:13** The inhabitants of the city would be like terror-stricken women. The gates of the city would be left wide open, thus making it easy for the enemy to burn it.
1. We see repeatedly in these battles the symbolism that there is no defense against the onslaught of the enemy outside of abiding in Christ.
- 3:15** Archeology has confirmed that the fire helped destroy the city. The attackers would be like the cankerworm (locust), devastating and complete.
- 3:16** No one could doubt the preeminence of the city commercially. It was one of the great trade centers of the ancient world. What had been heaped up for many years would be taken away.
- 3:17** Their military leaders are here likened to locusts with wings stiffened by the cold, which, after being warmed by the sun's rays, regain strength and vitality and fly away.
- 3:18** **Your shepherds** were the political officials.
- 3:19** Nineveh's destruction would be greeted with delight by all. According to The Babylonian Chronicle, the rule of the tyrant ended in 612 B.C. — "the wages of sin is death". (**Rom 6:23**)

The sad moral of this entire book is that it didn't have to end up this way. Had the people continued to seek The Lord and His face, He would have blessed the nation, as He did when they repented in the days of Jonah.

What will the final chapter of our life read like? I think Paul sums up the only sure way to avert any slipping away like the Ninevites did.

- Phil 3:8** Yet indeed I also count all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may gain Christ,
:9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith;
:10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
:11 if by any means I might attain to the resurrection from the dead.
:12 Not as though I had already attained, or am already perfect; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me .
:13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but this one

thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

NOTES

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