

The Consequences of Justice

General Topic: God Requires Justice

Sunday, December 26, 2021

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Lesson Text: Nahum 1:1-3, 6-8, 12-13, 15

Background Scripture: Nahum 1

Nahum 1:1 The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

2 God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.

3 The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

4 He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.

Nahum 1:6 Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

7 The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.

8 But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

Nahum 12:12 Thus saith the Lord; Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more.

13 For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.

Nahum 12:15 Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

Lesson Objective(s):

In this week's lesson we will experience the execution of justice through the prophecy of Nahum, revealing that belief in God will always prevail.

Teaching Tools:

Word puzzles may be developed from the following site: www.puzzlemaker.com. Also, www.dtlk.com has several visual aids that may be beneficial, as well as www.kidsundayschool.com which provide other helps for teaching.

Bible Journaling may be an interesting way to involve older teens in self-expression of the lessons they are taught. Visit www.lifeway.com/Articles/how-to-start-bible-journaling-in-six-easy-steps to find ways to use this valuable tool to learn and reinforce Scripture.

The Lesson:

The book of Nahum opens with a brief identification of the prophet Nahum. Then it goes into a psalm of praise that celebrates the power and goodness of God. This comforting picture of God is contrasted with the evil deeds of the Assyrians who had taken the Northern Kingdom of Israel into captivity in 722 B.C. With graphic language, Nahum presents a prophetic picture of the coming judgment of God upon the Assyrians.

He informs the nation of Assyria and its capital Nineveh that its days as a world power are coming to a close. Likewise, as another demonstration of God's justice and deliverance, believers can look forward to the time when He will bring upon the evil world powers and unbelievers what He did to Assyria—total destruction (Nahum 3:7, 18-19).

Background

Nahum's vision which covers all three chapters of the book occurred about 666-615 B.C. Nineveh, the capital of the ancient Assyrian Empire was noted for its cruelty and violence (Jonah 3:8). This is confirmed by the ancient records found there. Under the preaching of Jonah in about 780 B.C., Nineveh and its king had turned to God (Jonah 3:3-10). But in the time of Nahum, a century later, the city had completely departed from God, invaded the Northern Kingdom of Israel and took many of its inhabitants away to Assyria in slavery in 722 B.C. They were ripe for God's justice for Nahum described Nineveh, the capital city Assyria as (Nahum 3:1). Therefore, Nahum's message, although given about a generation before the actual destruction of Nineveh, is not a call to repentance, but a warning that judgment was sure to come (see Nahum 1:9. 3:7-10).

The Burden of Nineveh (Nahum 1:1-4)

About 100 years earlier, Jonah had, in God's name, foretold the speedy overthrow of the great city of "Nineveh;" but then the Ninevites repented and were spared, and their destruction did not take place. At that time, the Ninevites clearly realized that it was to their advantage to turn from their evil ways, for doing so would save their city from destruction.

But eventually they returned to their wicked ways and it was worse than ever as "Nahum" said, it was "a bloody city, full of lies and robbery" (see Nahum 3:1). So, instead of sending them a prophet preaching repentance like Jonah had done, God sent them this prophecy to reveal their doom, which was now irreversible.

A lesson here for us is that when we are given a reprieve for our sins, it will not continue if our repentance does not continue. After repenting, if men and women turn from the good they start to do, they can expect nothing other than for God to turn from the favour He began to show because of their repentance (see Jeremiah 18:8-10).

The Breaking of Nineveh (Nahum 1:6-8)

Nahum's message to Nineveh was to warn them about God's jealousy and cause them to tremble before Him. Their idols were insignificant things and there was nothing formidable about them. When it comes to the mistreatment of His own, the God of Israel is "greatly to be feared above all gods" (see Psalms 89:7; 96:4). God resents the deliberate disrespect and contempt shown to Him by those who deny His existence or any of His perfections. Those who set up other gods in competition with Him, destroy His laws, ridicule His word, and are often abusive to His people.

Not many years earlier, the Ninevites found God to be slow to anger when He gave them forty days to repent, which they did (Jonah chapter 3). Maybe because of that

experience they presumed upon God's mercy now thinking that He would once again refrain from destroying them. But this time when the Ninevites had no intentions of repenting, they would find that the God of Israel is not only merciful and gracious, but He is also just and jealous for His name and His people. And Nahum having shown the power of the justice of God's wrath, now shows that there is no way that His enemies can stand up to or contend with it. Nahum presents God here as a consuming fire, terrible and mighty. His indignation against sin, the fierceness of his anger, and His fury are poured out not like water, but like fire, like the fire and brimstone that the Lord rained on Sodom.

Here, Nahum sees unrepentant sinners, like the Ninevites, as stubble before a fire, weak, having no power against the wrath of God. Unrepentant sinners are utterly unable to stand up against God's wrath, in an attempt to resist it. So Nahum poses the rhetorical question: "Who can stand before his indignation?" No one! No, not the proudest and most daring sinner; nor the world of the ungodly, and not even the angels that sinned (Isaiah 14:9-19; Jude 1:6).

A person may bear up under some of the effects of God's displeasure in this world, but the fierceness of His anger, when it fastens immediately upon the soul, who can bear it? Instead of resisting the Lord, sinners should repent and "fear before him" (see I Chronicles 16:30; Psalms 96:9; Ecclesiastes 3:14; 8:12-13) and "stand in awe, and sin not" (see Psalms 4:4).

The Birth of a New Beginning (Nahum 1:12-13, 15)

Verse 14 is not part of our printed lesson, but in that verse, Nahum declared that God had commanded the utter destruction of Nineveh and their gods. Since the fate of Assyria was commanded by the Lord, their destruction was certain. While Sennacherib, the king of Assyria prevailed and carried away many Israelites to Assyria (2 Kings 17:6, 23), undoubtedly, every day brought bad news to God's people. But now, the prophet said "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that

bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!" We find these words used by another prophet, Isaiah to illustrate the mercy of the deliverance of the people of God out of Babylon (Isaiah 52:7).

Speaking by the same Spirit, God's true prophets (Jeremiah 23:25-32) often used the same expressions. These words are also used by the apostle Paul and applied to the great redemption brought to us by our Lord Jesus, and the publishing of it to the world by the everlasting gospel (Romans 10:10-15). Jesus' ministers are those messengers who bring "good tidings," who preach "peace by Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:36-37). How welcome is their message to those who see their misery and danger because of sin!

Final Thoughts

Because of the gloomy, pessimistic tone of the Book of Nahum, some people may wonder how this picture of God's wrath and judgment can be reconciled with the God of grace and love in the New Testament. The truth is that as the sovereign, all powerful God, He has the right to work His purposes in the world. Judgment against sin is a part of the work which He must do in order to remain a just and holy God.

Nahum's announcement of God's coming judgment also carries a call for holy living and faithful proclamation by Christians (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8), God's Holy People (1 Peter 2:9-10). Our work is to carry the message of His salvation to those who are surely doomed unless they turn to God in repentance and faith, and that can only happen by trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (John 14:6; Ephesians 1:8-16).

Be Salt! Be Light! Be Blessed!