

## Nahum Chapters 1-3 – John Karmelich

1. If I asked you to open your bible to the book of Nahum, you might say I just made that up, as to imply there's no book of Nahum. Well, there is a book of Nahum and yes, we're there. I'm going to crank it all out in one lesson. The next time someone mentions this book, you can say, "I know that. It's a small 3-chapters book in the Old Testament about the destruction of a foreign city." If you get that, you know the basics. I'm going to take a step further to explain why we should care about this book. It's a prediction about the fall of a great empire that existed about 2,700 years ago. It's here to remind us about God's judgment. The short version is that God wants to show He's god of the world. Therefore, the groups that conquer Israel must suffer defeat as to show that those who mess with God's people get messed with themselves, and badly.
2. Confused? Great, welcome to my study of Nahum. Hopefully, by the time you get through this you'll not only have a new appreciation for a book you've probably never realized existed, and a better understanding about the way God works with non-believing nations and people.
3. At this point, let me give my lesson title: "The rest of the story". For those of you who grew up in the United States in the last fifty years there was a famous radio broadcaster named Paul Harvey. He would give a mid-day news broadcast. (This was long before the days of the internet.). Then he'd follow it up in with the evening news and often use the tag line, "The rest of the story". It just seemed like a perfect title for a "follow up" book about Nineveh. OK, time to give the background story in order to explain the "rest of the story".
  - a) In the 7th Century BC, Israel was divided into two countries. The Northern One turned to idolatry and after a long period of this, God said in effect, "that's enough of that". The big boys on the block (as I'm fond of saying) was the Assyrian Empire. God allowed them to conquer the Northern Kingdom. They were even threatening the Southern One, but God in effect said "Not so fast". To prove He's God, both 2nd Kings 19 and Isaiah 37 tell us the fact that 185,000 Assyrian soldiers died in one night. To make a long story short, let us just say the Israelites were not fond of the Assyrians for destroying the "north" and almost destroying the "south".
  - b) In order to tell the "rest of the story", first I have to review another bible book. That's the book of Jonah. If you were with me, God told a prophet named Jonah to travel to the capital city of the Assyrian Empire and tell them to repent. When Jonah hesitated, God explained His "executive incentive plan" more clearly, (the whole whale thing). Let's just say it worked and the city of Nineveh which may have been the world's largest city back then, (the capital of the Assyrian Empire) turned to God due to Jonah's preaching.
  - c) That leads me to the "rest of the story". Nahum lived about 150 years after Jonah. At this time, the Northern Israel Kingdom was long gone. God gave Nahum a vision about what is going to happen to Nineveh, since they've resorted to their evil ways and now God will wipe them out. The short version is two other groups organized a combined rebellion to destroy that city. It happened pretty much as Nahum described it in Chapter 2 here. So how do we know that Nahum didn't write that book after it occurred? The short version is we get strong clues as to when it was written and it occurred long before that city went down to destruction. So you know, Nahum lived about 650BC, and Nineveh was totaled about 600BC. It was destroyed so badly, it wasn't discovered again until 1840. Part of the city was rebuilt in recent times and ISIS (or ISIL, I forget) destroyed that effort recently.
4. OK John, this is all interesting ancient history and I'm glad you enjoyed yourself learning all the ancient detail, but we're in desperate need of a "why should we care" speech right about now? I will start with the obvious that God doesn't let people get away with anything and let's just say ISIS torture and killing techniques were around in those days as well. It's also proof that those who mess with God's chosen people get "messed with" by God and we would not want to be in their shoes on judgment day. That's the big picture idea. However, there are other issues too.

- a) If nothing else, this book reminds us that God knows history before it's written and we'll never get away with anything in this world. Let me pause for the reminder that no sin is unforgivable except a lifetime denial that Jesus is God. We may suffer in this life for what we have done but we are living by God's grace once we accept that fact.
  - b) The short version of the book is it describes why God is going to judge this city, how He'll judge it and how the city will suffer for what they've done. That's pretty much a summary of this three chapter book. It's part of the bible to remind us that people eternally suffer if they chose to live as God forbids. Let's put it this way, after Jonah preached, the residents of Nineveh should have some knowledge of what God expects of them and not turned to idols. A generation or two later, they were back to their old sinful habits and it goes downhill from there. While God doesn't hold us accountable for the actions of our grown children, we're held accountable as a society is to pass on our values about God so that the next generation is aware that there are consequences for their actions.
5. OK you may say. I'm a God-fearing person and I'm raising my children to have the same outlook. Why should I care about all this ancient history? I could cheat and say, it's in the bible so learn it! The better answer is it is a reminder that nobody gets away with sin, and there is limit to what He will stand in a society before judgment comes down. With that said, I'd like you to join me as I'm going through these three chapters in one lesson. Hopefully, you'll come out the other end with a greater appreciation of how God views sin and how we can avoid making our own mistakes like this large city did. With that said, it's time for "the rest of the story":
6. Nahum Chapter 1, Verse 1: An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.
- a) You probably noticed that I didn't give my normal "who, what who and why's" of Nahum to start this lesson. That's because Verse 1 pretty much gives us all we do know. Scholars debate over what or where "Elkoshite" is. It could have been his family's name or where it was Nahum was from. I've studied a bunch of the theories and I think the best one is he's from the Sea of Galilee area (that was part of the destroyed Northern Kingdom) and lived in the Southern Kingdom to give Israelites a message about God's plans for the Nineveh.
  - b) Realize that Nahum described this message as a "oracle". It's as if God showed him this vision and Nahum had to write it down and preach it as it was burden upon him.
  - c) The reason this message was historically important was those living in the "South" when Nahum was written saw the fall of the "North" and saw part of the Southern Kingdom go down as well. It'd be natural for the Israelites to wonder, "What about those guys? When and how will they be punished for doing this?" That's why Nahum got this vision so that the Israelites would realize "it's not over" and God's still on the throne.
  - d) The obvious message to you and me is when life's falling apart, God's still there, He's still in control and He's still working the world out on His timing. The details of what Nahum learned about this destruction is a great little proof of how God knows all things up front!
  - e) OK, I covered, the where, I covered the why, a brief note on the "when". My best estimate is about 630 BC, give or take a decade or two. That means he lived when Isaiah lived, and a few quotes of this book are similar to Isaiah's. It probably means Nahum lived through the fall of the North Kingdom and preached in the Southern Israelite one.
  - f) One more thing about Nahum. His name means "comforter of God". There's a possibility that the city of Capernaum (New Testament fame, in ruins today) has effectively the same name as the prophet Nahum, but it is not known if that city was named after him.
  - g) One more technical note: In John's Gospel (7:52) the bible scholars of Jesus day stated that no prophet came from the Galilee area. They were technically right and wrong. Both the prophets Jonah and Nahum were said to have come from that area, but since both of them preached about Nineveh and not Israel, one can argue either side is correct. Ok enough of that, now that we got the background set, let's move on to the message itself. Anyway, the prophet Nahum preached in Israel about what will happen to the Assyrians, bank on it!

7. Verse 2: The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies. <sup>3</sup> The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet.
- a) John's simple translation, "Don't mess with God". The longer version is that an attribute of God is that He cares for those who are called to be His people.
  - b) Consider why Nahum wrote this. At the time the Nation of Israel was facing extinction. If you and I were watching our world fall apart, we too might be wondering, "Where is God in all of this?" The answer is He's there, He cares for us and in His timing, He'll harm badly (putting it mildly) those who harm His disciples. One of the hard aspects of life is to face the fact that the world works on His timing, not ours. Remember why the Israelites faced destruction in the first place. They as a whole turned to idols and were ignoring how God called them to live. Having a foreign army wipe them out is like God saying, "You want idols, I'll give you all you want in a foreign land". Then God needs to remind them and us, that He's still in charge, He still cares for us as a whole and will take vengeance out on those who harm us on His timing.
  - c) When Verse 3 says God's like the "whirlwind and the storm", it's a colorful way of saying we don't know how God works, but when He does, He is powerful and we'll know when it occurs. A storm is one of those things we hide from waiting for it to pass. In that sense God's wrath is something to be feared. If you need a motivation to use your life to make a difference for Him, I'll just say His wrath isn't something to be messed it.
  - d) Finally, the text refers to the " clouds are the dust of his feet". First let's get any picture we have of what God looks like out of our head. I figured a long time ago, if God is God, He can look like anything He chooses to look like at any time. We can't die God assuming He looks like anything. We're reading mental images to help us realize how much power He has as accomplish what He wants to accomplish. We're reading illustrations of "We can't imagine how big God is, but imagine the worst storm one can, and one can get the idea of a God we can't see working in ways we can see". That's the idea here.
  - e) I also admit, that I'm fascinated that whenever we read of God the Father speaking in the bible, the word clouds are used. I'm thinking of the few times in the Gospel where it says God the Father spoke. In every one of those references, clouds are mentioned. The same applies when God's voice was manifested to the Israelites. So what's the deal with clouds and God? Think of fog. Fog is like being inside a cloud. Fog makes things foggy to keep it simple. It's the idea that we can't fully comprehend God, so using the cloud image that reminds us that we may see some aspect of God working, but our knowledge is limited.
  - f) Now that you got the basic idea, I can get back to Nahum, as he was getting on a role.
8. Verse 4: He rebukes the sea and dries it up; he makes all the rivers run dry. Bashan and Carmel wither and the blossoms of Lebanon fade. <sup>5</sup> The mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it.
- a) Verse 4 is essentially saying, "You don't appreciate the world as it is? Remember that God has the power to change nature at any time He feels like." If we accept the fact that there's a god who created the world in the first place, why do we forget that He's got every right to "rearrange the furniture" if He feels like it? It's like the old joke that if we invite a guest in our house, that doesn't give the guest the right to rearrange the furniture. However He is not the "guest" He's in charge of all things. If God wants to dry up a big body of water, He's got that right since He made it in the first place. We do have a handful of occasions of God doing just that in the bible if for no other reason, than just to prove He can do that.
  - b) Speaking of "rearranging the furniture", Bashan and Carmel are two places in Israel that'd be associated with good farmland. It's God saying, if I wanted to make good land into a wasteland, it's My business and I can do that if I wanted to. The same idea is for Lebanon. It was known for its forests. Again, the key point here is ""Don't mess with God".

- c) With all that imagery in mind, let's look at Verse 5. It opens with "the mountains quake before him and the hills melt away". To state the obvious, it's not literal. It simply refers to the fact that God has the power to rearrange things at His discretion. I'm not saying it is God that causes every earthquake. I'm saying the God who created everything is well aware of how "natural disasters" have a dramatic affect upon the environment. Realize at the least that the bible is very clear about a big earthquake that'll take place in Jerusalem before Jesus returns and that rearranges the landscape there. Anyway, if you want a big sign of when Jesus returns watch the news for if a major earthquake happens there.
9. Verse 6: Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; the rocks are shattered before him.
- a) Keep in mind that Verses 2 through 8 are considered "psalm like". All that means is these verses read in Hebrew like poetry to describe God's power and attributes. OK, why have all of this? Remember the fear the Israelites had at that time. They watched the Northern Kingdom go down and parts of the Southern Kingdom destroyed by this empire. To have a big speech that essentially says, "God cares for His people, He can rearrange things if He wants to and despite all the damage being done to God's people right now, He's still there and still ruling and Israelites don't have to worry about being wiped out as a people!"
    - i) The obvious point to you and me, is our salvation secure and we as believers shall win in the end despite whatever we're facing at the moment.
  - b) Meanwhile, now that I've made that point, back to the psalm. The essential point is when God moves in a major way, the losers are going to lose, period. An old expression of life I like is, "We can't win and we can't get out of the game!" It's a not so subtle way of saying that it's necessary to turn our lives over to God as He'll win anyway.
  - c) For those of us who already trust in Jesus as payment for our sins, the issue is not only to share His love with others, but also in the toughest of times, that God's still there, He still is in charge and He's still going to win on His timing. That's the point behind the imagery shared in this verse.
10. Verse 7: The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him, <sup>8</sup>but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh; he will pursue his foes into darkness.
- a) The "psalm" finishes with some specifics. Verses 2-6 give colorful language to remind the Israelites that it's not just "God will one day win", but that to prove He cares for our lives, He is going to destroy Nineveh.
  - b) This is a good as spot as any to give a quick background on Nineveh. This city dates back to Genesis 10. It was founded by Nimrod who also founded Babylon. Both cities are close to each other and would both be in Iraq today. The city required three days to travel from one end to the other as told in Jonah. History records the city had 1,200 towers. Chariots could race along the city walls. The Tigris River ran through the city and estimates were that it held a million people at one time. The Assyrian Empire lasted 700 years. The last king at the time of Nahum had a horrid reputation. They'd conquer cities and pile up the skulls of those they captured in giant pyramids as to say, "Don't mess with us!" Anyway, God responds to that power by saying in effect, "Let Me tell you who not to mess with!"
  - c) At the time of the fall of Nineveh (shortly after Nahum wrote this), there was a civil war and there was no strong leader. Parts of the empire were lost to the Babylonians and to a group called the Medes. Those groups combined to attack that city. The way they got in was that the Tigris River flooded and it destroyed part of the wall. That allowed the army to enter that city and conquer it. It was destroyed so completely, for millenniums, lots of bible writers thought Nineveh was a myth! History records that Alexander the Great did march through that area, and didn't recognize it. It wasn't until 1840 that an archeologist rediscovered it's ruins and archeological digs occurred for a century after that. OK, this is interesting history, why should I care?

- i) Read the verse again. Nahum said the end would come with a flood. It happened exactly as Nahum said it would. That leads to the question, how do we know that he wrote this after it happened? For starters, Nahum was writing this in Israel and well, they didn't have satellite news. Also the text says this as a future event. The opening of this book said it was a vision Nahum had. Anyway, his source is better than the evening news or the internet: He had God Himself describing all of this to Nahum in a vision. Also, there are clues that he lived at the same time as Isaiah as some of their verses are very similar. Speaking of this vision, let's get back to it.
11. Verse 9: Whatever they plot against the LORD he will bring to an end; trouble will not come a second time. <sup>10</sup> They will be entangled among thorns and drunk from their wine; they will be consumed like dry stubble.
- Keep in mind the damage done to Israel. Again, the Northern Kingdom was destroyed as well as parts of the Southern Kingdom. Nahum is essentially saying to them, "this is it for these guys. Yes they're doing a lot of damage to your world now, yes a lot of Israelites are going to die because of them, but they're messing with God's chosen and He'll win in the end, so bear with the short term damage."
  - The obvious message to us is about perspective over suffering. To borrow a saying I like, "Pain is inevitable, happiness is a choice", (Dennis Prager).
  - By the way, returning to the story of how Nineveh was destroyed historians say despite the fact that Nineveh was under siege from the Babylonians, they felt safe inside of their city walls. They figured, we've got plenty of fresh water, lots of food growing here inside the walls. History records the army drinking as opposed to guarding. Anyway, as I said the wall was breached by a flood, the attacking army had an easy victory. In a sense it's "true justice" as Nineveh was burned to the ground just as the Assyrians destroyed many a place they had conquered.
12. Verse 11: From you, O Nineveh, has one come forth who plots evil against the LORD and counsels wickedness.
- OK, who's the you here? Most likely, it refers to the king of Assyria who also led the effort to destroy Israel. He was the one who thought he's invincible and can conquer any piece of real estate he wanted. As I said in the introduction, God allowed the North Kingdom to be destroyed due to idolatry, but at the same time, God had to punish them for attacking His land to prove the Israel God is also "The" God.
  - Anyway, Nahum is on a roll, back to it:
13. Verse 12: This is what the LORD says: "Although they have allies and are numerous, they will be cut off and pass away. Although I have afflicted you, O Judah, I will afflict you no more. <sup>13</sup> Now I will break their yoke from your neck and tear your shackles away."
- Let me give a few words about Nineveh's allies. What's common among all great empires is they enlist foreigners. It's like saying, "You can be conquered and mowed down, or you can join us as part of this empire". Anyway the Assyrians had allies. God is saying here in spite of all of that the great city of Nineveh is going to be conquered and destroyed.
  - Now for the important question: The text says, "I (referring to God) will afflict you (which would refer to Israel) no more. Considering how much the Israelites have suffered since this was written how can this verse be possible? The answer is context. The text is saying that Nineveh will harass Israel no more. It doesn't mean that God doesn't have the right to punish Israel for sins in the future.
  - So what is the "yoke from their neck and tear their shackles". At the least think of it as a reference to taxation. History records that the King of Israel paid taxes to Assyria to say in effect, "You're the big guys on the block and we'll pay you taxes to prevent any more of your destruction here. It may also refer to literal shackles. As I've stated in past lessons, when the Assyrians conquered a place, they'd relocate the prisoners all over their empire as to prevent further rebellion. As I said, these guys were bad news!

- d) Let me also share one more bit of history, as you know how much I love this stuff. Why did they attack Israel anyway? The short version is Egypt was the other big power in the area, and Assyria fought and defeated Egypt and Israel was a "prize on the way home". I will discuss that a little more, later in the lesson.
14. Verse 14: The LORD has given a command concerning you, Nineveh: "You will have no descendants to bear your name. I will destroy the carved images and cast idols that are in the temple of your gods. I will prepare your grave, for you are vile."
- a) Once again we get a reference to the complete destruction of Nineveh. One has to realize how amazing that prediction was. It'd be like saying a major city like New York or Tokyo will die and be completely destroyed. As I said, it was destroyed so completely many did consider Nineveh a fable until it was rediscovered around 1840.
- b) Remember that both Assyria and the Babylonians were full of idols to their gods. God let them conquer Israel as if to say to His people, "You like idols, I'll give you all you want!"
- c) Anyway, God destroyed this city fairly quickly and thoroughly.
- d) OK enough of the losers. Let's focus on the winners for a verse.
15. Verse 15: Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, and fulfill your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed.
- a) Again, one has to read this in context. The "wicked" refers to the Assyrians. It isn't saying Israel will never be conquered again. It means, "These guys (the Assyrians) are toast!"
- b) Nahum is encouraging the Israelites to honor God by keeping their annual festivals. The priests are to continue to offer sacrifices at God's temple. It's Nahum saying, I'm not going to let these guys destroy My temple, so do My "business as usual" in Jerusalem.
- c) OK then, one chapter down, two to go.
16. Chapter 2, Verse 1: An attacker advances against you, Nineveh. Guard the fortress, watch the road, brace yourselves, marshal all your strength!
- a) In this fairly short second chapter (13 verses), Nahum tell us about the actual destruction of the city of Nineveh. As I'm fond of saying, there were no chapter breaks in the original text. The point is God used this section of the book to explain how and why Nineveh will fall as a city. The point here isn't to learn ancient history. It's to remind us that those who "mess with God's people get messed with themselves", which I'm starting to realize would have been a great alternate title to this lesson. Since this is the second of only two books in that focus on Nineveh (Jonah being the first), "the rest of the story" is still better.
- b) Anyway, by now you realize how much of a history buff I am and I'll just say I studied some of the actual details of the fall of this city so I can match it up with what Nahum said a long time before it occurred.
- c) Speaking of bible background, the Assyrian Empire had a great king, who conquered a lot of the Middle East including Egypt, who was the other great power in the area. While the Assyrians were working their way back from Egypt, that's when they destroyed the North Israel Kingdom and parts of the south. Anyway, after that great leader died (he was killed by his sons after God wiped out the 185,000 soldiers in one night) the bible tells us his two sons killed him (2nd Kings 19:35-37).
- d) The "rest of the story" is Nineveh lacked a great leader at this point in history and internal battles existed over control of the empire. Parts of it were being attacked by a group called the Medes and also by the Babylonians. The Medes are part of Iran today, and Babylonia is part of Iraq today. Anyway, these two groups made an effort to attack Nineveh. I'll just say these two groups failed at first, but kept trying and eventually did conquer the largest city in the world at that time. With that background in mind, Verse 1 reads like a warning to Nineveh to "brace yourself, death is knocking at the door". Therefore this is a verse that makes more sense if one knows a little history. The application for us, is to appreciate the people who protect our country as danger always lurks of those who want to harm us!

17. Verse 2: The LORD will restore the splendor of Jacob like the splendor of Israel, though destroyers have laid them waste and have ruined their vines.
- a) Speaking of applying Verse 1, that's what the bible doing in Verse 2. A little background is going to be helpful here. Jacob is the common ancestor of all twelve tribes of Israel. Jacob was renamed Israel by God. The word Israel means "struggled with God". When God did that renaming, the underlying point is that despite those struggles, Israel "is going to win in the end" just as God made unconditional promises to us Christians that we too will win in the end based on our trust that Jesus is God, died for our sins and He is in charge of our life. My point's that God promised that Israel would be "fruitful" for God in by using their lives as a witness for Him. Despite the fact, Assyria had recently destroyed most of the land of Israel, God will restore their role one day. My simple point is this verse is another reminder that if you "mess with God's people, you'll get messed with yourself" as He will win in the end. Nahum is saying that in spite of all the damage the Assyrians have done, God's going to restore Israel again one day, and we can "bank on it".
  - b) In the meantime, back to the destruction of Nineveh.
18. Verse 3: The shields of his soldiers are red; the warriors are clad in scarlet. The metal on the chariots flashes on the day they are made ready; the spears of pine are brandished.
- a) The short version here is Nahum is describing how the attacking army against Nineveh and how they looked going into battle. The verse has a big emphasis on the color red. Archeologists argue blood was put on their clothes and spears to give it that red color. It may have been done so the enemy's fear will grow by the site of blood or it may be to cover any wounds they get. The point is simply that the red and scarlet color was emphasized as part of this battle. As to spears, realize they're made of wood.
  - b) The point here is simply that what the Israel's feared the most at that time, the Assyrian army is about to go down. More details in the next few verses.
19. Verse 4: The chariots storm through the streets, rushing back and forth through the squares. They look like flaming torches; they dart about like lightning. <sup>5</sup> He summons his picked troops, yet they stumble on their way. They dash to the city wall; the protective shield is put in place. <sup>6</sup> The river gates are thrown open and the palace collapses.
- a) Remember we're reading a vision. Nahum is describing a war as if he's there watching it in person. Picture a big city, with a huge wall surrounding that city. A river runs through it and around it. This city stood for probably a few thousand years. Given the problem of trying to attack around a river, let alone a huge city wall, the verses describe what's going on inside the city and outside the gates.
  - b) Notice Verse 6: It describes the gate that goes over the river being thrown open. As I said, history records how it was destroyed. The river grew and surged, and that ripped part of the city wall. That's how the attackers got into the city. Anyway, what we have here is the battle being described as if Nahum is a "war correspondent" for the evening news.
  - c) Before I move on, remember why we're learning all of this ancient history: One reason is to remind us that God knows history before it occurs and God gave Nahum this vision as to show the Israelites that He does tell biblical prophets events before it occur. What's far more important is the reminder that when we're facing our own huge force that desires to destroy all we have, it's the reminder that God's still on the throne, He's still in charge and He'll deal with the "Assyria's of the world" on His timing.
  - d) OK then, back to the war:
20. Verse 7: It is decreed that the city be exiled and carried away. Its slave girls moan like doves and beat upon their breasts.
- a) Keep in mind the Assyrian Empire lasted for 700 years. Realize the city of Nineveh stood in Genesis and was founded by Nimrod. My point is it's been around for a long time. Yet God says in this verse, it's all coming to an end here and now. It'll be destroyed so bad, its existence won't even be verified again for over 2,500 years.

- b) Verse 7 gives the human details of that destruction. It mentions the survivors are carried away. From the highest officials to the slaves. The "moaning like doves and beating their breasts" is essentially saying everyone's lives will be coming to an end at this time.
  - c) Realize this city got rich by conquering lands all around there. It is estimated that those in that city lived in luxury based on what they conquered around the greater Middle East. A big city like Nineveh which probably stood for thousands of years, to suddenly end must be shocking for Nahum's audience to read and think about.
  - d) Remember all those verses in the previous chapters about "lands quaking" at what God is capable of doing? Imagine the most powerful human force on earth or the most powerful city one can relate to, essentially conquered in a moment. The underlying point here is to realize God's still in control, He's still "rearranging the furniture" whenever He wants to.
  - e) To quote an old proverb, "History is "His story" told before it happens."
  - f) Meanwhile, time to get back to our war reporter!
21. Verse 8: Nineveh is like a pool, and its water is draining away. "Stop! Stop!" they cry, but no one turns back. <sup>9</sup> Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! The supply is endless, the wealth from all its treasures! <sup>10</sup> She is pillaged, plundered, stripped! Hearts melt, knees give way, bodies tremble, every face grows pale.
- a) Remember that Nineveh had a river running through it. They had farm land inside of it's gates. The city was wealthy beyond imagination from all the places they conquered. Now picture all it being taken away from an attacking army. Whatever valuable thing was not taken away, was burned to the ground to the point where no one realized it was ever even a city for thousands of years.
  - b) Now picture Nahum in Israel, a "thousand miles away" reporting all of this as if he's there describing the battle first hand. There was no internet or satellite television. Many people in Israel were even having their doubts about God protecting them. Many had turned to serve other gods. Much of Israel was destroyed by this empire. If it wasn't for God killing 185,000 soldiers in Israel when Nahum was alive, they too would be part of that empire!
  - c) What I want all of us to remember is not the details of how this city was destroyed. What we need to keep in mind is God is still on the throne, God can't learn so He knows what'll occur before it does. He knows how long we'll live and what'll happen in our future. We are not God and we don't know our future. All we can do is put our trust in Him to guide us and use our lives to glorify Him as that's the purpose of "his-story" in the first place!
  - d) OK three more war verses to go in Chapter 2:
22. Verse 11: Where now is the lions' den, the place where they fed their young, where the lion and lioness went, and the cubs, with nothing to fear? <sup>12</sup> The lion killed enough for his cubs and strangled the prey for his mate, filling his lairs with the kill and his dens with the prey. <sup>13</sup> "I am against you," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will burn up your chariots in smoke, and the sword will devour your young lions. I will leave you no prey on the earth. The voices of your messengers will no longer be heard."
- a) I wanted to include all three verses as a block. Notice the references over and over again to lions or young lions. Keep in mind how powerful Nineveh was at that time. That's why they were compared to lion's in their prime. It's the idea of "they're not to be messed with" but of course to use my tag line of this lesson, "God's going to mess with those who mess with His chosen people." No matter how powerful our enemy may seem at any point, or no matter how big the challenge is in front us, no matter the odds, God controls history to work on His timing.
  - b) Of course that does not mean if we by ourselves attack a million man army, we're going to win. It means that if God calls us to do something, we're on the winning side no matter if the results are good or bad. This is about seeing life in a bigger picture than just ours. It's about accomplishing His will as a team with the goal of having as many people as we can to realize He created this world, He rules over it and our goal is to do His will.



- c) OK then, most of us believe that. Now what? So glad you asked. If it's a situation where one is wronged, work with the authorities and do what one can. The key is not letting any situation affect one's joy in life. As I like to say, pain is inevitable, attitude is a choice. One of the greatest things one can do in life is not letting pain affect our attitude. Obviously if one is in horrid pain, one has to deal with it. I'm talking about situations where we feel as if "it's us against the world". One does what one can and by our attitude be a good witness for Jesus by our attitude. I'm not perfect at this, but I get the general idea.
  - d) Meanwhile, we left Nahum describing the fall of a large and powerful empire as well as a fall of a large city. For what it's worth historians record that everything of value was taken out of that city and the rest was burned. Here's Nineveh a great and powerful city where the leaders are considered "lions" due to their power.
  - e) There's more to say on this, and I'll get at as we cover the last chapter of this short book.
23. Chapter 3, Verse 1: Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims!
- a) I'm debating how "horrid" I want to get in describing what the Assyrians are known for. I recall a famous line from Dennis Prager when he asked someone from Iraq, what they are known for? His answer was, "We're the most cruel nation in world history". Let's just say that ISIS wasn't the start of cruelty in that area. The Assyrian Empire was famous for the terror it struck over who it conquered. It wasn't just a matter of killing, it was the brutality involved in the process. Let's just say body parts were cut up and piled up.
  - b) With that horrid picture in mind, reread Verse 1 and keep it in mind as we go through the next bunch of verses. The city was rich in plunder and at the same time famous for how it treated the people they captured.
24. Verse 2: The crack of whips, the clatter of wheels, galloping horses and jolting chariots!  
<sup>3</sup>Charging cavalry, flashing swords and glittering spears! Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses-- <sup>4</sup> all because of the wanton lust of a harlot, alluring, the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft.
- a) Yes, I spent way too much time learning about Assyrian history, and I'm trying to give the PG-13 version. (By the way, I think I've reached a point where I could teach a nonbiblical class on Ancient Middle East history after all this studying.) Let's be honest, the text itself gives "PG-13" details and our imagination can take it from there.
  - b) Let me share one more fact as to not waste my history classes. The chariots had spikes on them pointing downward as to inflict more pain on those they ran over. It's amazing that God waited as long as He did to judge them. Even if this city had no knowledge of God, it is obvious from the text that this group is ripe for judgment simply based on how they are treating others. If half of what is said in this verse is true, let's just say I'm positive ISIS will go down simply because God doesn't stand for this type of treatment of people!
  - c) OK, since we all get the idea, I can move on to the next few verses:
25. Verse 5: "I am against you," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your shame. <sup>6</sup> I will pelt you with filth, I will treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle. <sup>7</sup> All who see you will flee from you and say, 'Nineveh is in ruins--who will mourn for her?' Where can I find anyone to comfort you?"
- a) Speaking of God "sticking His face in this mess", I present these verses. If you study some of the historical facts and speculation about when Nahum was written, most likely it was around 630 BC with the destruction of Nineveh about 25 years later. My point is even if word of Nahum's words reached "Iraq", it's at a point where God said "It's judgment time and it's too late to change My mind". This was a city that repented when Jonah preached about 150 years earlier. If nothing else, this teaches that if God spares a city and that place then changes for the worse over time, God too can "change for the worse over time.
  - b) The other thing to get from this ancient history is people don't get away with stuff forever. God won't allow this type of horror show to continue forever.

- c) So let's ask the other tough question: if the Assyrians were this horrid for a long time, why did God allow so many innocent people to die? The answer is this life is not fair if this life is all that there is. If there is a next life and that's eternal, that's the only way He can make up for this. One of the reason that 30% of the bibles is predictions is to prove to us that He exists, knows all things and judges all things. Remember that the Israelites that Nahum is preaching too is among those victims and have seen their cruelty first hand!
  - d) Meanwhile, I left God via Nahum cursing out the Assyrians. Nahum is describing shame to come to this city and how it'll be in ruins. Since I explained those details already let us move on to the next set of verses.
26. Verse 8: Are you better than Thebes, situated on the Nile, with water around her? The river was her defense, the waters her wall. <sup>9</sup> Cush and Egypt were her boundless strength; Put and Libya were among her allies.
- a) My loose translation: Hey Nineveh, who do you think you are? Who do you think you're messing with here? The city of Thebes was in Egypt and was a large city like Nineveh. It was conquered and looted by the Assyrians. Like Nineveh it was built adjacent to a big river. History records that the Assyrians defeated Egypt along with their neighbors listed in these verses.
  - b) Enough of history, the point is no matter how big the problem, how big the issue facing us the God we worship is bigger than that and is capable of ending such issues whenever He wants to. Ok, but what if God isn't intervening the way we like? We just make the best decision we can with the information we have and the resources we have. That's what He expects of us without violating His desire for our life.
  - c) OK enough positive talk, back to Nineveh's destruction.
27. Verse 10: Yet she was taken captive and went into exile. Her infants were dashed to pieces at the head of every street. Lots were cast for her nobles, and all her great men were put in chains.
- a) I'll just say that what we read in this verse is what the Assyrians did to the cities they captured. God is paying them back "in kind" for how they've treated others. It is one big reminder that God isn't to be messed with as we will be punished in the end.
  - b) Didn't you once say people don't go to hell for the sins they commit, but for rejecting God in their lives? Even if we don't know God, we instinctively know killing is wrong. What I am saying is the evidence of how one acts is the proof of one's rejection to do what's right in life. That's the underlying point of this fairly gruesome text.
28. Verse 11: You too will become drunk; you will go into hiding and seek refuge from the enemy.
- a) Remember that this vision is about Nineveh. While the target audience is Jewish people and those that read the bible, it's about the Assyrians. I remind you of that fact as it saying that just as the Assyrians conquered most of the known world in the greater area (one day look at a map of how big an area the Assyrian empire covered!), so they'll run in fear and even get drunk to drown the pain of what's happening to them.
29. Verse 12: All your fortresses are like fig trees with their first ripe fruit; when they are shaken, the figs fall into the mouth of the eater. <sup>13</sup> Look at your troops-- they are all women! The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies; fire has consumed their bars. <sup>14</sup> Draw water for the siege, strengthen your defenses! Work the clay, tread the mortar, repair the brickwork!
- a) You have to admit, Nahum has a flair for the dramatic. It's as if he's teasing the Assyrian army and their people here. Calling the troops a bunch of women, saying how the wood bars that guard the city doors are on fire. Verse 12 compares their forts to a bunch of fruit trees that are shaken for fruit. Verse 14 is a taunt saying, go do your best to stop it, build up your defenses. The obvious point is Assyria has no idea who they are messing with.
  - b) Speaking of which, would the Assyrians even realize the God of the Israelites was picking on them? Most likely not. However they would know they're guilty of murder, pillaging and other horrid crimes. They must realize that if there is a single God that rules, He'd not allow what they're doing to continue. It's a reminder that in the end crime doesn't pay!

- c) I also realize I'm going pretty fast through this text, but let's be honest, the text is pretty straightforward as to what it's trying to communicate. I'm just filling in background some background commentary and explain how we can relate to all this ancient history.
  - d) Speaking of that ancient history, we've only got five more verses to go.
30. Verse 15: There the fire will devour you; the sword will cut you down and, like grasshoppers, consume you. Multiply like grasshoppers, multiply like locusts!
- a) By this point Nahum is going back and forth between stating facts about their destruction and taunting them. I don't know what Nahum will be like in heaven, but I suspect he's the type of guy who has a flair for the dramatic. Anyway, this verse is describing how the city will be burned to the ground and like a swarm of locusts, everything will be consumed. It is as if Nahum is then saying, "go ahead grasshoppers do your worse!"
31. Verse 16: You have increased the number of your merchants till they are more than the stars of the sky, but like locusts they strip the land and then fly away. <sup>17</sup> Your guards are like locusts, your officials like swarms of locusts that settle in the walls on a cold day-- but when the sun appears they fly away, and no one knows where.
- a) OK time for more taunting. Nahum knew enough about their "success" to realize what they've become. Nahum also understood well God's plans for them. The gruesome details have been laid out for us in this chapter of the book. I could describe some of the details of these verses, but they're pretty self-explanatory.
  - b) Here's something else to consider, notice the lack of good news. If you've been with me as I've gone through the minor prophets, there is often a touch of good news mixed in with all the bad news of Israel's pains and woe's. With the Assyrians here, it's pure bad news.
  - c) If nothing else, it is a reminder of the ultimate fate of those who turn from God. Yes, there may be short-term benefits in this life, but that's all the reward they'll ever get for eternity. The destruction of Assyria here is a "preview" of what the entire world will experience one day for turning from the God who created them in the first place. That's the great underlying lesson of all this destruction.
32. Verse 18: O king of Assyria, your shepherds slumber; your nobles lie down to rest. Your people are scattered on the mountains with no one to gather them. <sup>19</sup> Nothing can heal your wound; your injury is fatal. Everyone who hears the news about you claps his hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?
- a) Speaking of proof that there is no good news mixed in with this lesson on realizing the eternal fate of those who turn from God, I present the last two verses.
  - b) The underlying point of this text is "they're beyond hope". They've been cruel to the point where God had to intervene as there is nothing else God can do to change the situation.
  - c) Let me modernize this to the 20th Century. Horrid crimes occurred on a massive scale in places like Germany, Russia China and Southeast Asia. It cost millions of lives to bring all of the guilty to justice. The point is God allows all of this to occur ultimately to prove He is in charge and people don't get away with cruelty forever.
  - d) Now in the 21st Century as we read of cruelty around the world, realize the God we serve won't tolerate that forever either. Yes, we may suffer in this lifetime, but He will prevail in the end and that's something we can bank on. There that's the positive news we can take out of a difficult book like Nahum: God's going to win in the end and it's a matter of us to chose who'll we serve until such judgment comes down again.
33. Let me end this by coming back to what I said to open this lesson. Nahum is a book most people don't even know is in the bible. It's a horrid war tale of the destruction of a pagan city guilty of a lot of cruelty. There is nothing positive said about them in this letter. A main reason this book was written is to understand that when tragedy strikes God's people, it's not the end of the story. This story tells of the end of the wicked. It's in effect a model of what happens to those who don't trust in God for their lives. OK now, you know "The Rest of the Story"
34. In the meantime, we made it through this book and it's time for the closing prayer.

35. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, we forget that the bible as a whole says a lot more about hell than it does about heaven. Help us to appreciate our eternal salvation. More importantly reading books like this remind us of the ultimate fate of those who seek God and those who don't. Help us to use the time you've given us to do Your will. Make it obvious to us what's Your will for us today. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.