

119

MINISTRIES

“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”

Minor Prophets, Major Messages | Nahum: God Will Not Clear the Guilty

The so-called “Minor Prophets” are a collection of twelve prophetic books in the Tanakh—that is, the Old Testament. Even though they are called the “Minor Prophets,” these books contain “major messages” that remain relevant to believers today. In this series, we will unpack the major messages of each Minor Prophet. We will discuss their practical applications for believers today and how they connect to the Messiah’s work and teachings in the New Testament.

In this teaching, we are looking at the Book of Nahum. Let’s dive in.

Nahum: An Overview

We don’t know much about the prophet Nahum. He was from a place called Elkosh, which may be a reference to Galilee or Capernaum (J. Gordon McConville, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Prophets* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 206).

The only other thing we know about Nahum is that his name means “comfort.” The meaning of Nahum’s name is significant to his message. Nahum’s prophecy provides comfort to the people of Judah by announcing the downfall of Nineveh (Nahum 1:1), the capital of the Assyrian empire. The Assyrians were notoriously cruel, and they seemed to have delighted in torturing and inflicting as much pain as possible upon the people they conquered (See James Bruckner, *The NIV Application Commentary: Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 28-29). So, Nahum declares God’s judgment upon the city of Nineveh due to its wickedness and violence. This was good news for the people of Judah and their neighbors, who were oppressed by the Assyrians.

Nahum’s message begins with a proclamation that God is slow to anger, but he is also wrathful and will not allow evil to go unpunished:

Nahum 1:2-3

The LORD [YHWH] is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD [YHWH] is avenging and wrathful; the LORD [YHWH] takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. The LORD [YHWH] is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD [YHWH]

will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

Nahum assures the people of Judah that they can take refuge in YHWH and be safe. At the same time, destruction is going to come upon YHWH's enemies:

Nahum 1:7-8

The LORD [YHWH] is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

In light of Nineveh's destruction, Nahum calls upon the people to celebrate and give thanks. The downfall of the oppressor is "good news" because there will finally be peace:

Nahum 1:15

Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace! Keep your feasts, O Judah; fulfill your vows, for never again shall the worthless pass through you; he is utterly cut off.

The rest of the book goes into greater detail about the downfall of Nineveh (Nahum 1:1-13), as well as the collapse of the entire Assyrian empire (Nahum 3:1-19), which occurred when the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians in 612 BC (J. Gordon McConville, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Prophets* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 205).

The last verse of the book mocks the fallen king of Assyria, stating that everyone who hears about his demise will rejoice:

Nahum 3:19

There is no easing your hurt; your wound is grievous. All who hear the news about you clap their hands over you. For upon whom has not come your unceasing evil?

Assyria serves as an example of what will happen to all who persist in wickedness. YHWH's enemies will face judgment.

Nahum's Major Message

People often feel uncomfortable with messages about God's wrath. Isn't God supposed to be loving and good? Why does he punish the wicked so harshly? But as Nahum proclaims, the downfall of the wicked is actually *good news* for those who are being oppressed by the wicked! It is *because* of God's love and goodness that he is *not* indifferent to injustice but opposes evil and executes wrath upon those who harm the innocent.

Part of the reason we might feel uncomfortable with the reality of God's wrath is that it brings to mind the severity of our own sins and that we, too, deserve wrath. As Nahum reminds us, YHWH will by no means clear the guilty. God's judgment is real. And as we see in other prophetic books, God's own people often sin and are judged in the same ways as these pagan nations. We have all sinned. We have all hurt others. But none of us want to face God's wrath.

Like the book of Jonah, Nahum ends with a question: "For upon whom has not come your unceasing

evil?” This question addressed to the king of Assyria is also a question for us who read these words. The text invites us to consider the destruction that our sin brings. How many people have been hurt by *your* disregard for others’ welfare as you pursued your own interests?

Nahum’s prophecy is a sobering warning. Judgment is coming upon all who persist in sin. However, there is a glimmer of hope, as those who take refuge in YHWH and seek his mercy will be protected. He knows who they are:

Nahum 1:7

The LORD [YHWH] is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him.

Interesting Connections

Nahum’s description of God’s character closely matches God’s own description of his character in Exodus:

Exodus 34:6-7

The LORD [YHWH] passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD [YHWH], the LORD [YHWH], a God merciful and gracious, **slow to anger**, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but **who will by no means clear the guilty**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

Nahum 1:3

The LORD [YHWH] is **slow to anger** and great in power, and **the LORD [YHWH] will by no means clear the guilty**. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

Both of these passages express that God is “slow to anger.” He does not rush to punish the wicked but rather grants them plenty of time to repent. Nevertheless, God’s patience in executing judgment upon the wicked should not be thought to imply that he will give them a free pass. Nahum’s prophecy is that God’s long-awaited judgment upon Nineveh has finally arrived.

And this message applies not just to Israel’s enemies but also to Israel—that is, those identified as God’s people. Just as Nahum says that God will not clear the guilty Assyrians, Exodus says that God will not clear the guilty Israelites. Once again, this warning remains relevant to us today. We must not think we are excused from the consequences of our sins just because we wear the label of “Christian” or whatever. If we refuse to repent, if we reject God’s grace, we *will* face judgment. As the apostle Peter writes:

2 Peter 2:20-21

For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [Messiah Yeshua], they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.

Thankfully, if you are watching this right now, there is still time. God is “slow to anger.” He has held off

judgment because he's been giving you a chance to repent. So, take that chance that God has given you, and turn to him!

How Nahum Points to the Messiah

The Book of Nahum reveals an aspect of Yeshua that may be underemphasized by many churches today. Although Yeshua certainly preached love and forgiveness, he also affirmed that the wicked who refuse to repent would face judgment:

Matthew 13:40-42

Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

According to Paul, Yeshua himself will return to grant relief to the oppressed by inflicting vengeance upon all who afflict God's people and refuse to obey the gospel:

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—since indeed **God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us**, when the Lord Jesus [Yeshua] is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, **inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus [Yeshua]**. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

Just as the fall of Nineveh was good news to the people of Judah, God's wrath upon the wicked at the end of time will be good news for God's people. The wicked will be judged, and then the people who the wicked oppressed will find relief and peace.

And that is Nahum's major message. Nahum, whose name means "comfort," brings comfort to God's people by announcing the downfall of their oppressors. Although God is slow to anger and desires that the wicked repent, eventually, God will execute his wrath. Nahum's prophecy serves as a warning that those who will persist in sin and refuse to repent will be judged. However, those who seek refuge in YHWH will be protected. There is still time. So, repent!

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

EMAIL: Info@119ministries.com

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/119Ministries

WEBSITE: www.TestEverything.net & www.ExaminaloTodo.net

TWITTER: [www.twitter.com/119Ministries#](https://twitter.com/119Ministries#)