

GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS

+ SESSION OUTLINE

1. The Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished (Nah. 1:1-6).
2. The Lord will be a stronghold for those who take refuge in Him (Nah. 1:7-8).
3. The Lord will be vindicated before the nations (Nah. 3:1-7).

Background Passage: Nahum

+ WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

God will punish all sin so that none may accuse Him of unrighteousness.

+ HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

The prophet Nahum declared that God will not allow the guilty to go unpunished, but He will be a stronghold for all who take refuge in Him. Our sin has made us guilty before God and deserving of His punishment, but Jesus was given to be our stronghold. All who seek refuge in Jesus will be saved.

+ HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because God will not leave the guilty unpunished, we rest in His righteousness, refusing to take vengeance into our own hands when we are wronged.

GROUP TIME

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

SETTING: Over a century after Nineveh's repentant response to God's warning through Jonah, God gave Nahum a final word for the Assyrian capital. We don't know how long the city's contrition lasted, but it eventually faded. In 612 BC, the Babylonians decimated Nineveh and—thanks to Nahum—God's people saw it coming. This book of prophecy is a record of God's message to His people suffering under the oppression of Assyria. To Nineveh, this was a severe indictment. But these words pointed the hearts of God's people to the holiness, justice, and faithfulness of the Lord, who would certainly, decidedly, and finally avenge the many wicked wrongs wrought by the Assyrians.

INSTRUCT: Ask group members to take a moment to imagine what life might have been like if the Allies had lost World War II and the Axis powers gained world domination.

DISCUSS: What might it be like to live under a foreign regime you saw as the enemy? (wait for a group member to respond first; only share your response as a conclusion to the discussion)

DISCUSS: How do you think you would handle being in that situation? (with sadness or depression; with fear or anger; with wanting to rebel or escape; with doubt toward God)

TRANSITION: Our sense of justice awakens when we witness wrongdoing, even more so when we experience it. Yet most of us likely live in a world that is relatively safe and comfortable and balks at the idea of a jealous God who judges sin. Most welcome the love, mercy, and grace of God, but the minute the message of divine punishment comes into the picture, it is quickly rejected instead of received with joy. In the oft-neglected, short book of Nahum, we are given a portrait of a God who is good to rescue His people and is good to enforce His justice against the wicked. Every sin is a great offense to God, and He will not allow sin to go unpunished.

POINT 1

THE LORD WILL NOT LEAVE THE GUILTY UNPUNISHED (NAH. 1:1-6).

1 An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh. **2** The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. **3** The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. **4** He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; he dries up all the rivers; Bashan and Carmel wither; the bloom of Lebanon withers. **5** The mountains quake before him; the hills melt; the earth heaves before him, the world and all who dwell in it. **6** Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Nahum 1:1-6** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use **PACK ITEM 13: HISTORY OF ASSYRIA** and the **VERSES 1-2** commentary to explain the following point (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

The Lord, the good God of Israel, is a jealous God. He will avenge His **glory** that is withheld by others through a display of His wrath. Certain judgment awaits the **guilty** before God.

DISCUSS: Why is it good that God is a jealous God? (since God is supreme, there should be no other gods; because He alone deserves praise and worship; because the Lord is all-good, His jealousy is also good; if God didn't care for His glory, He would allow us to go our own ways to our destruction)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 3-6** commentary to emphasize the following idea (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

Nahum's prophecy of judgment against Nineveh was intended to **comfort** God's people who suffered under the Assyrians. Yet the Lord is also **patient** that sinners might repent and be saved.

DISCUSS: What emotions might rise to the surface knowing God will punish all wrongdoing one day? (sadness for unbelievers; fear for self; gratitude; comfort; vindication; joy; praise to the Lord)

TRANSITION: The jealousy, vengeance, and wrath of God are sober subjects, but the reality of God's wrath should bring God's people great comfort in knowing God one day will punish all evil and rescue all those who have come to Him in repentance and faith.

NOTES



COMMENTARY

VERSES 1-2 / About a century after Jonah's effective encounter with the Ninevites, the Lord had another message for Nineveh through the prophet Nahum, which is summarized in verse 2: Yahweh is a jealous God, takes vengeance on His enemies, and shows wrath to those who oppose Him.

God is **"jealous,"** and rightly so, because Yahweh is the one true God. All other supposed gods are imposters. That God is jealous means He has a proper, aggressive zeal to defend what is rightfully His as the Almighty Maker and Master of all.¹ So if God is the ultimate Sovereign, it is good and right for Him to be jealous against anything that would attempt to steal His unequalled glory. Yet the Lord is also jealous to protect His people so that they are not distracted by false gods and judged along with their followers for denying God the glory He alone deserves (see Ex. 20:5; 34:14).

Because the Lord will not be rivaled, the natural outworking of His righteous jealousy is **"vengeance."** Today, *vengeance*, like *jealousy*, usually carries a negative connotation, but not so with God. In Hebrew, the word for "vengeance" was typically connected to law, order, and the actions of one who had authority to enforce justice.² When it comes to the law, executing a deserved punishment is the right, proper, and expected response to wrongdoing.

The avenging of God's glory properly expresses Yahweh's jealousy as the only true and holy God. The vehicle of God's vengeance is God's **"wrath."** Nahum twice weaved this connection into his words through parallelism, a staple of meaning for Hebrew poetry. First, Nahum made a general correlation: "avenging" corresponds with "wrathful." For God, vengeance and wrath are one and the same—two sides of the same jealous coin. Then Nahum repeated the parallel and included the object of God's wrath: "takes vengeance on his adversaries" is connected with "keeps wrath for his enemies." Certain judgment awaits the guilty before God.

VERSES 3-6 / One of the purposes of Nahum's prophesy was to bring comfort to God's people who were suffering because of Assyria, a wicked, brutal nation. The message of verse 2 would have been received with a hearty "Amen!" as God's people awaited God's vengeance on their behalf. Like Jonah, the people of Judah would have eagerly desired the judgment of their enemies for their wickedness.

But that judgment hadn't come yet. What was God waiting for? His people longed for justice, for God to avenge the suffering they had experienced at the hand of the Ninevites. So Nahum reminded God's people that God is not only full of wrath but also full of power and patience. The phrase **"slow to anger,"** also used in Jonah 4:2, draws from God's self-revelation in Exodus 34:6-7. It expresses the idea that God is long-suffering and abundantly patient with sinners. God will punish wickedness. God will avenge wrongdoing. But He also provides a way out for evildoers, giving them the time, kindness, and patience to turn away from their sin and turn to Him in repentance and faith before being swept away in His judgment.

"Bashan," "Carmel," and **"Lebanon"** were all areas known for their fertility and abundance. The original audience would have immediately thought of stunning seashores, choice cattle, towering trees, and fruitful fields. So the thought of these abundant oases being turned into desolate wastelands on account of God's wrath would have been striking indeed. Nahum painted a powerful picture of a thunderous, almighty, invincible God who can command and control the waters and the land. The wickedness of the Ninevites was no match for the whirlwind of God.

The rhetorical questions in verse 6 invited the listeners to engage more deeply in the conclusion: God's wrath cannot be escaped. Though the days may have seemed dark, and evil seemed to triumph, God would have the last word.

POINT 2

THE LORD WILL BE A STRONGHOLD FOR THOSE WHO TAKE REFUGE IN HIM (NAH. 1:7-8).

7 The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. **8** But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Nahum 1:7-8** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSE 7** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

When the whirlwind of God's wrath comes, all who continue to **trust** in the Lord need not fear because God will never cease to **care** for them.

DISCUSS: What are some ways we should expect to experience God's care for us? (through the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit in us as believers in Christ; a peace knowing the God who has proven His love and care in the past will continue to do so; through the ministry of the church supporting us in our times of need; through the hope of knowing His promises for our ultimate salvation from sin and death are true and sure)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSE 8** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Utter **destruction** was coming for the unrepentant Ninevites. Whatever the **evildoers** had started, God would put to a full and complete stop.

TRANSITION: God's people in the days of Nahum needed a glimpse of the future so that they could endure their immediate trials. The Bible does not promise us a trouble-free present, but we are given such a hope for the future. God will bring ultimate triumph over His enemies, and we believers in Christ will be the beneficiaries of eternal peace in His presence.

NOTES

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"God's covenant was true every time I looked elsewhere for love and acceptance. His covenant has been true every time you've acted out of fear and doubt. It is still true, no matter the circumstances we face or the hurt we hold in our hearts. Even when the temporary feels painfully permanent, His covenant is true. Remember whose you are."³

—Amanda Bible Williams

COMMENTARY

VERSE 7 / Nahum 1:7-8 gives us a succinct summary statement of the entire book of Nahum: God is both deliverer and judge, caring Father and relentless executioner; He both offers protection and brings destruction.

In this passage, Nahum has been entrusted to give to God's people a pronouncement. In verses 2-6, Nahum laid the foundation for the prophecy—the character of God. If God is not a supreme Sovereign who powerfully rules over every nation and clearly commands all of nature, then the prophecy was merely an empty threat. But the Lord is sovereign, a jealous God who will avenge His glory and His people by wielding His wrath. Therefore, Nahum's message was a stark warning and call for all to trust in God alone, along with a promise of protection for those who do.

Verse 7 concludes a list of attributions to the Lord, started in verse 2, which makes up a hymn of praise to God. It may feel funny to praise the Lord for His jealousy and vengeance, but His righteous wrath is just as praiseworthy as His generous grace.

Nahum had already shown that God's judgment was impending, but it had been held back by God's long-suffering patience so that as many as possible would be led to repentance (see Rom. 2:4). Both of these truths point to the fact that **“the LORD is good.”** God's patience holds His wrath back in perfect timing. His perfect goodness tethers His vengeance. His goodness means that we can trust His plan, His actions, and His timing.

Nahum made it clear that we can **“take refuge”** in the Lord. Every person has committed sin and deserves God's jealous vengeance. Yet God has provided a way of escape through repentance and faith in God, now exclusively in Jesus Christ, God in the flesh.

For those who do take refuge in the Lord, Nahum highlights the promise that God **“knows”** them. In the context of this verse,

this promise communicates a deep sense of intimacy and insight, safekeeping and support.⁴ The Hebrew grammar in this statement also suggests that God's knowing is a continual work, as is the human taking of refuge. There is a deeper and continual care that God's people benefit from as they repeatedly take refuge in the safety of God's provision.⁵

VERSE 8 / Connected with the conjunction **“but,”** the words of verse 8 are a direct contrast to those in verse 7. Instead of experiencing God as their stronghold in the midst of the storm, those who continue to choose rebellion will encounter the unhindered whirlwind of His wrath, leading to their annihilation. The goodness, safety, and care for those who trust in the Lord are in juxtaposition with the destruction, darkness, and death those who oppose the Lord will receive.

Through another use of poetic parallelism, Nahum highlighted what God will do. He correlated God's action of complete destruction with the chasing of His enemies into **“darkness.”** Again and again, Scripture contrasts light with darkness, which is symbolic for death and dread. Furthermore, Nahum may have been making a connection between the coming doom of their enemies, the Ninevites, and the days of Noah, when God wiped out the wickedness of the world through a flood.⁶ Utter destruction was coming. The Lord would **“make a complete end of”** the evildoers and all the evil they had done. The destruction He would accomplish will be exhaustive, with no chance of a sequel.

Once again, this pronouncement would have brought great comfort to God's suffering people. When Jesus returns, the evil one, his minions, and those who refuse to follow Christ will finally be served His judgment. It will be complete, sufficient, and final. **“Trouble will not rise up a second time”** (Nah. 1:9). As it did for God's people long ago, this truth ought to bring us great hope as well.

POINT 3

THE LORD WILL BE VINDICATED BEFORE THE NATIONS (NAH. 3:1-7).

1 Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder—no end to the prey! **2** The crack of the whip, and rumble of the wheel, galloping horse and bounding chariot! **3** Horsemen charging, flashing sword and glittering spear, hosts of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end—they stumble over the bodies! **4** And all for the countless whorings of the prostitute, graceful and of deadly charms, who betrays nations with her whorings, and peoples with her charms. **5** Behold, I am against you, declares the LORD of hosts, and will lift up your skirts over your face; and I will make nations look at your nakedness and kingdoms at your shame. **6** I will throw filth at you and treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle. **7** And all who look at you will shrink from you and say, “Wasted is Nineveh; who will grieve for her?” Where shall I seek comforters for you?

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Nahum 3:1-7** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 1-3** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

The **wickedness** and **strength** of Assyria would not last. The Lord condemned them to a bloody end, the kind they perpetrated on other nations.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 4-7** commentary to note how sin affected Assyria’s relationship with the Creator and with other peoples and how it ultimately led to Nineveh’s destruction by God (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #42: *Sin’s Effects in the World:* Sin does not only impact our relationship with God; it is also the root of our broken relationships with the people around us. Human sinfulness is the reason the creation groans in anticipation for redemption and deliverance from its **bondage** to evil powers (Rom. 8:20-22). Sin has infected and redirected the social structures of society, leading to **injustice** and **oppression**. The distorting effects of sin are visible all around us, but the good news of the **gospel** is that the battle against these powers will be won through the work of Christ.

DISCUSS: How should believers in Jesus respond to the promise of **destruction for God’s enemies?** (with praise for God’s justice; with humility, knowing we are saved from such destruction by God’s grace alone; with honesty to the world that sin will reap eternal destruction; with sharing the gospel so people from every nation, tribe, and tongue might hear and be saved from sin and death)

NOTES

THE PROSTITUTE

Nineveh was characterized as a prostitute because it lured the nations and cultures around it by promising power and prosperity, but in the end, it enslaved and took advantage of those weaker nations. The Ninevites also practiced witchcraft and sacred prostitution in their idol worship. This metaphor is used again in Revelation 17-18 to describe God’s enemies.

COMMENTARY

VERSES 1-3 / Nahum filled this section of his prophecy with imagery, leading the reader to see, hear, and possibly even smell the scene. This was meant to elicit an emotional response. It's one thing to hear, "God is going to judge the Ninevites for their sin." It's quite another to see the scene of bloodshed and hear the clash of combat.

The Hebrew word for "**woe**" is used fifty-three times in the Old Testament; forty-one of those instances are prophetic. It is used in the context of mourning as well as judgment, and sometimes both meanings are implied. Every instance of this word within biblical prophecy is that of an announcement of certain doom—a "shame on you" cursing. The original readers among God's people would have seen each of these warnings as an absolute pronouncement on the recipient of the statement of woe.⁷

The Assyrians were well known for their bloody atrocities; thus, this was an appropriate woe to "**the bloody city.**" Much historic and archaeological evidence provides detailed records of the Assyrian brutality. They tortured their victims by the flaying of skin, gouging of eyes, and impaling of bodies. One of the Assyrian rulers, Shalmaneser III (ruled 858-824 BC), boasted about one of his conquests: "In the moat (of the town) I piled them up, I covered the wide plain with the corpses of their fighting men, I dyed the mountains with their blood like red wool."⁸ However, when God brought His punishment to the city known for the ruthless shedding of blood, Nineveh itself would be full of their own bloody bodies because they had ignored and violated the image of God in their victims.

The Assyrian battle "**chariot**" was a widely feared, seemingly invincible vehicle of destruction. Assyrian ruler Sennacherib (ruled 704-681 BC) named his chariot "The Vanquisher of the Enemy."⁹ Yet here the vanquisher is not an inanimate wagon of wood but the undefeated Lord of hosts, who is bringing certain and complete destruction to His enemies.

VERSES 4-7 / Nahum depicted the Ninevites' evil deeds as "**whorings**" and "**deadly charms.**" Their rulers were seductively cunning and duplicitous. Assyrian leaders wooed their victims through the promise of refuge, seducing nation after nation into enslaving treaties that ultimately only benefited Assyria.¹⁰ In response to this great evil, the great vindication of the Lord was coming.

The result of all this great wickedness was clear—the Lord declared, "**I am against you.**" This was more than just words; it was a disposition that would be followed by action. Nahum made this same declaration in 2:13. Included along with these two declarations were several "**I will**" statements, personal proclamations from the Lord of what He would do to Nineveh on account of her evil. In 2:13, the focus of God's ire was on Assyria's military, which would burn and die at God's hand. In 3:5-6, God promised to shame His enemy in the same way they had shamed others.

God's vengeance against Nineveh would result in a great reversal. Where nations used to run to the refuge of Assyrian abundance and power, they would now recoil in disgust from a nation in shame-filled ruins. The one who afflicted others with destruction and disgrace would herself now be destroyed and disgraced.

Once again, Nahum used rhetorical questions to emphasize his point. Who would show sympathy to the Ninevites? Who would bring them comfort? No one! The merciless villain would not be shown mercy. The devastated defrauder would not be comforted.

God is indeed good to punish the evil deeds of people and thus to comfort the afflicted. The Son of God will do that avenging work (Rev. 19:11-21). But each one of us deserves the wrath depicted in these verses. Yet God has provided a way of escape through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus. We simply need to find refuge in Him alone.

MY RESPONSE

Because God will not leave the guilty unpunished, we rest in His righteousness, refusing to take vengeance into our own hands when we are wronged.

NOTES

HEAD:

God is holy. Human beings are sinful. Fueled by His gracious love, God mercifully sent His Son to pay sin's due penalty so that we can enjoy God forever. Through this glorious provision of redemption through the cross, the wrath of God against us is satisfied. The blood of Jesus paved a path for sinners to be reconciled to a rightly jealous God. Yet unrepentant sinners, those who refuse to put their faith in Jesus as their only hope, will be judged. Punishing sin is right and good of God to do.

What are some ways God's jealousy and vengeance should affect the way we think, feel, and act?

HEART:

Though the eternal destiny of the lost is heart-wrenching (especially when it comes to those lost souls we know personally), the justice of God ought to bring us great hope. When we are the ones who have been robbed, abused, and mistreated, our hearts long for things to be made right. Injustice rightly stirs up a righteous indignation within us. Wrongdoing cannot be allowed to go unpunished. Therefore, the jealousy and justice of God ought to be celebrated among God's people, not dismissed as outdated doctrines that are out of step with the times.

How do you need to pray today in light of the jealousy and justice of God?

HANDS:

Some leaders teach the doctrines addressed in the book of Nahum quickly and shallowly, if they don't ignore them altogether. Yet every word from God recorded in His Word, the Bible, is for our growth. Every doctrine of God's character should be embraced. We cannot rightly worship God if our view of Him is grossly flawed. If we want to grow closer to Him, we must grow in our knowledge of Him through the Word He has given us.

What steps will you take to grow in your knowledge of God and your faith in Him, namely, in Jesus, the Son of God?

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"God will hold the guilty accountable. No one will get away with sin and injustice—neither individuals nor nations. Now is always the appropriate time to respond to God's gracious patience with repentance and faith. Those who delay turning to the Lord in repentance and faith are only storing up divine judgment for themselves. Don't be like Nineveh, for whom it was already too late."¹¹

—Ken Fentress

POINT 1: THE LORD WILL NOT LEAVE THE GUILTY UNPUNISHED (NAH. 1:1-6).

+ COMMENTARY

“In the Hebrew text the participle *nōqēm*, ‘avenging,’ is used three times in this verse, once as an adjective and twice as the verb of its clause, ‘takes vengeance.’ The participle carries the idea of continuous activity. In West Semitic languages the word group *nqm* ‘seems to have been preferred for its legal connotations and should, therefore, be associated with the maintenance of justice.’ This gives a positive connotation to the word, connecting it to lawfulness, justice, and salvation. It is normally God’s prerogative at times given to people used as his instruments. To carry out the vengeance inherent in *nqm* one must have proper authority or legitimacy. The use of *nqm* suggests that God is King. Nineveh had failed to acknowledge this and had taken vengeance against the nations into their own hands without proper authority from God. ‘God’s “vengeance” in the OT can be described as the punitive retribution of God, who, as the sovereign King—faithful to his covenant—stands up for the vindication of his glorious name in a judging and fighting mode, while watching over the maintenance of his justice and acting to save his people.’ It is never used for blood revenge. Nahum emphasized the work of God to defeat his enemies. ‘The notion of “vengeance” is no foreign element in the OT revelation of God, but is a consequence of his holiness (Jer 50:28-29); zeal (Isa 59:18), coupled with his wrath (Mic 5:14), is subordinate to his justice (Isa 63:1,4). Yahweh is the *’ēl nēqāmōt*, God of vengeance (Ps 94:1).’ Patterson points out that ‘because God is holy, He cannot let sin go unpunished; because only God is perfectly holy and just, as well as all-wise, only He can extract the proper punishment (Ps 94).’”¹²

+ ILLUSTRATION

Many kids have played King of the Hill. The actual “hill” could be a couch ottoman, a boat dock, or an actual hill of some sort, but the point is the same: defend your rule at all costs. Others attempt to dethrone the “king” by the dragging, pushing, and pulling of all sorts. Typically, because there are more threats than one to the throne, the current king eventually wears out and is usurped by a less-fatigued child, who must then immediately defend the hill as the new king. Though the rules may vary on how the king can be dethroned, there is one rule that is universal to all rounds of the traditional King of the Hill: only one person can be king. There is no co-reign of the hill. You’re either king or not. And while you’re king, you must defend your rule from all threats.

EXTRA

When it comes to God's kingdom, there is only one true God. His rule extends to every place. His jurisdiction is over every heart. His authority is supreme over every other ruler. Our God cannot be dethroned; there is no co-reigning with other so-called gods; and He will rightly defend His name and rule with everything He has. Unlike kids in the backyard, however, God's power is unlimited. He will never tire of defending His hill. And He is right to fight for the elimination of anyone or anything that gets in the way of His people being able to worship the King of all kings, the King of all hills.

POINT 2: THE LORD WILL BE A STRONGHOLD FOR THOSE WHO TAKE REFUGE IN HIM (NAH. 1:7-8).

+ **COMMENTARY**

“The contrast between the fortunes of believers and the wicked is often drawn in the Scriptures (e.g., Pss 1; 37; Prov 4:10-19; Matt 7:13-14,24-27). Those who trust in God are the ones who know and believe in him (cf. Gen 15:6) and hence have the assurance (Isa 26:3) that God will take note of them in the adversities of life (Pss 17:7; 18:30; 31:19-20), when life's circumstances rush in upon them like an overwhelming flood (Pss 18:1-6; 32:6-7; 124). Indeed, God's goodness reaches out to all such believers; he becomes their fortress in distress (Exod 15:2; Pss 27:1-3; 28:8; 91:2; Isa 25:4; Jer 16:19). Conversely, those who trust in self, who rise up against God, will find that he will, in turn, stand against them. Those who plot against him (Pss 1:1; 2:1-3; 21:11) can be assured that their plotting will self-destruct, leaving them in danger of judgment (cf. Pss 1:4-5; 2:12; Hos 7:15-16).”¹³

+ **ILLUSTRATION**

Some love to fly. Some hate to fly. Others refuse to fly. When flying, a brief peek around the cabin can reveal different types of passengers. The one who is completely comfortable in his surroundings is often asleep or well into an in-flight movie before the plane reaches cruising altitude. But the one who is not happy to be there is often found with her hands awkwardly gripping the arm rests with an uncomfortable look on her face. Though they are on the same plane, heading to the same destination, brought there by the same pilot and crew, the experience of the ride is altogether different. For the one who trusts in the pilot and plane, it is a peaceful opportunity to get a bit of extra sleep or enjoy a new movie. For the one who is full of fear and what-ifs, unable to trust in the crew and cabin that has been tasked to get her from point A to point B, the ride is a rough one—turbulence or not.

Nahum depicts the wrath of God as a storm. This storm is inescapable. All sin will be consumed by it. But for the one who trusts in Jesus to pay the penalty of his or her sin, when God pours out the storm of His wrath in full, the repentant sinner's experience will be one of resting in the provision of Jesus. However, for the one who refuses to place his or her trust in the work of Christ, that one will be consumed by the storm of God's wrath with nothing to shield him from the coming judgment.

POINT 3: THE LORD WILL BE VINDICATED BEFORE THE NATIONS (NAH. 3:1-7).

+ COMMENTARY

“This passage reminds all that God is a God of justice (Ps 9:7-8), who abhors sin and will reward men and nations equitably in accordance with their deeds (Ps 67:4; Isa 1:27; Jer 46:28; Joel 3:1-8; Acts 17:31). This truth is in harmony with the further scriptural revelation that the Messiah will bring justice to the nations (Isa 42:1-4; Matt 12:18-21). His justice will include the judging of the great harlot of the future, the worldwide socio-religio-economic system known prophetically as Babylon (Rev 17). This world system will be brought to an end (Rev 18) by the returning Christ (Rev 19:1-3,11-21), who ‘judges fairly’ (Rev 19:11) and whose ‘judgments are true and just’ (Rev 19:2). In addition, his just activity will culminate in the establishment of salvation and righteousness for all (Isa 51:4-6). Seeing, then, that they may look forward with confidence to that time when the earth will be administered in true and holy justice (Isa 32:1; Ezek 34:16; Rev 15:3-4), believers should be challenged to act justly here and now (Mic 6:8; cf. Isa 1:17; Jer 7:5) and entrust their lives to him ‘who always judges fairly’ (1 Pet 2:23).”¹⁴

+ ILLUSTRATION

If you’ve ever seen pictures of Nazi concentration camps and the emaciated men, women, and children who filled them, you no doubt have experienced a life-changing pull on your heartstrings. Getting just a peek into their suffering stirs up something within us, as our sense of justice bubbles up in both pity for the victim and anger toward the oppressor. When we witness wrongdoing, our conscience demands justice and hopefully rouses us to action. It is in the most desperate situations that hope is most powerful. When your desperate situation involves the wickedness of others, the pain is even more deep. The repercussions of their evil actions are suffocatingly real and can last a lifetime. There is much comfort to be received in knowing that God is the righteous Judge who will avenge the wickedness of the evil you are enduring. God sees. God knows. God will make all things right. We may not always know or understand His timing, but we can be certain that every sin will be paid for—either through the blood of Christ as payment for sins or through the just condemnation of the unrepentant sinner.

References

1. Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), Na 1:2.
2. Kenneth L. Barker and Waylon Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, vol. 20 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 1999) [Logos].
3. Amanda Bible Williams, in *She Reads Truth*, by Raechel Myers and Amanda Bible Williams (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2016), 50.
4. James E. Smith, *The Minor Prophets* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994), 386.
5. Kenneth L. Barker and Waylon Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, vol. 20 in *The New American Commentary*, 179.
6. *Ibid.*, 179.
7. *Ibid.*, 218-19.
8. *Ibid.*, 220.
9. Richard D. Patterson and Andrew E. Hill, *Minor Prophets: Hosea–Malachi*, vol. 10 in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2008), 383.
10. Kenneth L. Barker and Waylon Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, vol. 20 in *The New American Commentary*, 223.
11. Ken Fentress, “Nahum,” in *Exalting Jesus in Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk*, in *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2016), 152.
12. Kenneth L. Barker and Waylon Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, vol. 20 in *The New American Commentary*, 167.
13. Richard D. Patterson and Andrew E. Hill, *Minor Prophets: Hosea–Malachi*, vol. 10 in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, 368.
14. *Ibid.*, 384-85.