

## A NATION JUDGED BY GOD

**TEXT: NAHUM 1:1-8**

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. I read an interesting article recently. It was written by my friend Evangelist John Van Gelderen.

2. The article is entitled, "Is There Any Hope for America?"

In 1984, when Reagan and Bush were running for a second term, my father, Wayne Van Gelderen, Sr. who is now with the Lord, was invited to the then Vice-President George Herbert Bush's house with a group of fifty evangelical preachers. Standing by the fireplace and visiting with his long time friend, Tim LaHaye, my father said that Vice-President Bush came up and asked them both this question: "Is there any hope for America?" What a sobering question coming from the Vice-President of the United States! If that question was asked in 1984, how much more penetrating is it in 2012? Is there really any hope for America? Perhaps some follow-up questions are in order: Is God still God? Does God still respond to those who respond to Him? The answers ought to be obvious.

Was there any hope for Nineveh in Jonah's day? Clearly, Nineveh deserved the judgment of God because of their wickedness and cruelties. In fact Jonah wanted them to be judged. But he had such confidence in God's compassion to a repentant people, he fled from God's commission to go to Nineveh and cry against it, for fear they would repent and God would then relent of His plan of judgment. Finally, Jonah arrived in Nineveh after a little motivating providence. Significantly, the "preaching" that God "bid" him to preach consisted of a concise statement of imminent judgment: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." It appeared to be hopeless—no hope for Nineveh. However the forty day delay perhaps signaled hope to a perceiving heart. Also the stay in the belly of the great fish likely affected Jonah's appearance and if the people of Nineveh became aware of how it came to pass, it undoubtedly enhanced the reality of Jonah's message. What is certain is that "the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them...and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jonah 3:5-10). *God prefers to revive rather than to judge!*

Eventually, Nineveh felt the powerful judgment of God as proclaimed by the prophet Nahum—150 years later. But three to four generations benefited

from this great revival at Jonah's time. We must "cry mightily unto God" as the people of Nineveh did (Jonah 3:8). This dynamic of seeking God is what determined the difference between the outcome of the books of Jonah and Nahum. As Joel Rosenberg asks, "Is this a Jonah moment or a Nahum moment?" At the very least, a revival among the saints would prepare God's people to remain vibrant under persecution. But a revival among the saints that spills over into an awakening among the lost could change the American horizon as it has done in past awakenings and delay judgment. If such an awakening spreads globally, it would fulfill God's purpose in having delayed His coming "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9), so that Jesus would return for His own—but that's another article.

With natural disasters increasing, war and terrorism constantly looming over us, and financial catastrophe at our threshold, we must respond to these messengers of judgment with repentant, seeking hearts. God's people must lead the way. God says, "If my people...then will I" (II Chronicles 7:14). There is hope for America if....

3. "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (II Chron. 7:14).

4. We know America is heading towards judgment.

5. The other night, the vice president made this statement:

"With regard to abortion, I accept my Church's position on abortion as a de fide doctrine. Life begins at conception. I accept that position in my personal life. But I refuse to impose it on equally devout Christians, and Muslims and Jews...I just refuse to do that, unlike my friend here, the Congressman. I do not believe that we have a right to tell other people, women that they cannot control their body. It's a decision between them and their doctor in my view, and the Supreme Court. And I'm not going to interfere with that."

6. Mr. Biden acknowledges that life begins at conception, but yet he says he refuses to try and stop it. And of course he employs some "double-talk."

7. We know America is heading towards judgment.

8. What we do not know is how much time we have before America is destroyed.

9. It will fall just like Nineveh fell. Like Nineveh, and the Assyrian Empire, and all of the other great empires that fell -- Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, Rome, etc.

10. Nahum the prophet prophesied during the reign of King Hezekiah, probably about 100 to 150 years after the revival under the preaching of Jonah.
11. The *Scofield Study Bible* says Nahum "has but one subject – the destruction of Nineveh" (*Scofield* introduction; 1:1).
12. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, located to the north-east of Israel. It was an immense city by the Tigris River.
13. Jonah reluctantly went to Nineveh to preach, and under his preaching the entire city got right with God (c. 862 BC). This is undoubtedly the greatest revival recorded in the Bible (cf. Jonah 3:3-10).
14. But as is often the case, the Ninevites went back to their wicked heathenistic ways, and by the time Nahum arrived on the scene 100 years later, they were more wicked than ever (Nahum 1:1, 2).
15. Interestingly, Nahum's name means "Comforter." But his message is not comforting to those who are not living right (cf. 1:2-6).
16. On the other hand, it is comforting to those who love God (cf. 1:7).
17. There are three important statements in our text this morning that I would like to emphasize.

### **I. GOD IS JEALOUS (1:2).**

1. The second commandment, recorded in Exodus 20:4-6, says, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."
2. Exodus 34:14 says, "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God."
3. God sent the prophet Jonah to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh. The people of Nineveh responded to Jonah's preaching.
4. The people of Nineveh did repent. Jonah 3:5 says, "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them."
5. I was driving in my car the other day and heard Mayor Bloomberg boasting how he spent a fortune getting homosexual marriage passed in Albany. And he said now he is donating \$250,000 to support homosexual marriage in Maryland when voters will decide on it next month.

6. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see this wicked man repent in sackcloth and ashes!
7. The people of Nineveh did repent when Jonah preached, but now when we get to the book of Nahum 100 years or more have passed, and God was going to judge them – He "will not at all acquit the wicked" (1:3).
8. The Bible teaches that sometimes God gives up on people. Proverbs 29:1 says, "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."
9. God gave up on the people in Noah's day, and He gave up on the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Romans 1).
10. And all throughout the Bible we see that God gives up on nations as well as individuals. And according to the prophecy of Nahum, He gave up on the Assyrians.
11. Nineveh was destroyed in 612 BC by the Medes and Babylonians.
12. The city of Nineveh was destroyed so completely that when Alexander the Great fought the Persians at the battle of Arbela nearby in 331 BC, he did not even know there had been a city there.
13. G. Campbell Morgan said, "So completely has this been fulfilled, that armies have actually marched over the city of Nineveh, ignorant of the existence of its ruins beneath."
14. H.A. Ironside said this about Nahum's prophecy of the destruction of Nineveh: "So exactly were the words fulfilled, that for ages the very site of Nineveh was lost, till, in the last century, Layard and Rawlinson made excavations and discoveries that brought to light the ruins of a metropolis so vast that none could longer doubt the declarations of Jonah and Nahum in regard to its splendor and magnificence, and its destruction when in the very zenith of its glory" (*Minor Prophets*).
15. God gave up on Assyria. There is no Assyria today. God told them that it was too late – it was all over (cf. 3:19).
16. J. Vernon McGee wrote these words: "You will find that every great world power went down, and they went down at a time when they were given over to wine, women, and song."
17. Dr. McGee added that when a nation reaches that point it is on the skids and will soon pass off into oblivion. Obviously the United States of America has reached that point. America has become a country that only cares about money, sex, and worldly pleasures.
18. As we read Nahum's prophecy, we cannot help but notice the similarities between his day and ours.

19. The repetition of vengeance, and the repetition of God's name in 1:2 and 3 emphasize the solemnity of Nahum's prophecy – it was all over for Nineveh.

## II. THE LORD IS SLOW TO ANGER (1:3).

1. The Bible emphasizes that the LORD is "slow to anger" (1:3). i.e. He is long-suffering and forbearing.
2. Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
3. However, the Bible also teaches that God is just "and will not at all acquit the wicked" (1:3; cf. Exodus 34:5-7; Psalm 103:8, 9).
4. Nahum preached that the LORD is a just God who must judge sin, and his prophecy begins with strong words depicting God's judgment: "jealous," "revengeth," "furious," "vengeance," "wrath," "anger", "indignation," "fierceness," etc.
5. However, Nahum also reminds us "the LORD is slow to anger" (1:3).
6. The LORD was patient and gracious to Nineveh. He sent Jonah the prophet to preach to them (Jonah 1:1, 2).
7. But Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh (Jonah 1:3).
8. So the LORD sent out a great wind, and later the LORD prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah (1:17). Then the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land (2:10).
9. The LORD made sure Jonah went to Nineveh!
10. The LORD was very patient with Nineveh. And the LORD has been very patient with America, but how long will He forbear?
11. Nahum 1:3 says, "The LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet."
12. When people talk about tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and tsunamis, and so on, they refer to "the wrath of Mother Nature."
13. Beloved, that is not the wrath of "Mother Nature," it is the wrath of God, who controls nature, and the weather, and the tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, volcanic eruptions, and rivers and seas and so on (cf. 1:3-6).
14. Nahum 1:3-6 speak of God's omnipotence. This is one of His divine attributes – along with His longsuffering and His righteousness.
15. Another one of God's attributes is His goodness – "The LORD is good" (1:7).
16. Beloved, thank God the Bible says the LORD is good and that "He knoweth them that trust in Him" (1:7). Are you trusting in Him?

17. Our Lord said in John 10:14, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."
18. Paul wrote in II Timothy 2:19, "The Lord knoweth them that are His." Are *you* one of His? What a tremendous blessing! He knows all about us, all about our burdens and our problems.

### **III. WHO CAN STAND BEFORE HIS INDIGNATION?**

1. Nahum asks, "Who can stand before His indignation?" (1:6). And the obvious answer is no one.
2. Malachi 3:2 says, "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap."
3. Revelation 6:17 says, "For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"
4. God's ineffable holiness, deeply offended and disgusted by man's wickedness, makes His indignation and fierce anger utterly unendurable.
5. Nahum said, "His fury is poured out like fire" (1:6). How little of this is preached today. Yet this was the message of Nahum and Isaiah and Jeremiah and all the Old Testament prophets, and John the Baptist, our Lord Himself, the apostle Paul, and just about every other preacher in the Bible!
6. God says, "and darkness shall pursue his enemies" (1:8b). Our Lord said the unsaved "shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:12).
7. Do you recall what our Lord said about the man who came to the marriage feast without a wedding garment? "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 22:13).
8. And what about the unprofitable servant? "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 25:30).
9. Jude refers to the wicked "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 13).
10. And Nahum says, "darkness shall pursue his enemies" (1:8).

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. There is a statement found twice in the book of Nahum (2:13; 3:5), and it is also found many times in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.
2. "Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts" (2:13; 3:5).

3. What a frightening statement!
4. On the other hand, Nahum 1:7 says, "The LORD is good...and he knoweth them that trust in him."
5. Which side are you on?
6. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12:30).