

God Will Judge All of His Enemies

After wars are over, the victorious nations often judge their enemies, as in the case of the Nuremberg trials after the Second World War, the judgments by tribunals after the Bosnian and Rwandan wars of ethnic cleansing and genocide, and more recently the Khmer Rouge Tribunal in Kampuchea. When crimes are discovered, the conquering countries organize a process in order to judge the perpetrators from the defeated powers and to punish them accordingly.

The book of Nahum teaches us clearly that God will judge the earth and will punish his enemies. I don't know how much we think about the Judgment Day, about that wonderful and fearful day when the Lord Jesus will return and the sky will disappear "like a scroll that is being rolled up" (Revelation 6:14), about the day when everything will be "naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account" (Hebrews 4:13)? The truth is that with our daily ups and downs and the busyness of our lives sometimes even in our churches we don't think or talk much about our Lord's return and his judgment. Certainly our irrational postmodern culture has no inclination to consider God (or anyone else!) as judge.

Nahum talks about the just judgment that God's enemies deserve. Verse 1 says "An oracle concerning Nineveh," the capital of Assyria, a hostile country to Israel, one that had subjugated its neighbors, including Israel and Judah. You will remember that Jonah preached in Nineveh about 100 years before the prophet Nahum, and the city repented and followed the Lord. But it seems that the Ninevites did not continue in their repentance and in this book God pronounces his judgment on the capital and on its inhabitants.

The Bible teaches that God is just and that he always judges justly. Adam and Eve deserved to die for their disobedience, but the Lord saved them, though they suffered the consequences of their sin. God judged the serpent and promised a savior for his people (Genesis 3:14-15). The story of the OT contains a series of the Lord's judgments: against the earth (Genesis 6-8), against Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19), against Egypt (Exodus 14), against the wicked kings of the northern kingdom (2 Kings 18) and against the unfaithful Israelites in Jerusalem prior to the exile (2 Kings 25). Being absolutely and perfectly just, God must judge.

We live surrounded by people who consider God as a loving being who saves everyone. The unbiblical doctrine of universal salvation is prevalent in the popular culture. But from Genesis to Revelation the Bible teaches that God will judge his enemies and that they will receive their deserved punishment. There's no escape from that punishment (see v 3). To ignore God's judgment is to ignore his character. God will judge his enemies...

So the Only Solution Is to Take Refuge in Him

Verse 7 confirms that the Lord is good, a stronghold who "knows those who take refuge in him." Who are those who take refuge in God? What does it mean to take refuge? How do we take refuge in Him? Because there's no doubt that the only solution to avoid the punishment from God's judgment is to take refuge in him.

It's important not to lose sight that we all deserve God's judgment. As Paul says in Romans 5, we were enemies and were reconciled to God through the death of His Son. In Ephesians 2 he says that we were far away but through the blood of Christ we have been brought near to the Father. There is nobody who deserves salvation; God would have been perfectly just in condemning everyone for Adam and Eve's sin. But on account of his mercy, he doesn't punish us with eternal separation from him, but he saves us and promises us

eternal life. Our Lord judges us, but through Christ, who took our sin on the cross, conquered death and declares us righteous before His Father.

To take refuge in the Lord means, according to v 7, that he knows us. It means that we have believed in his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, repent and follow him with the help of the Holy Spirit. It is to renounce and leave behind worldly living and trust in God himself. It means repentance, a change of lifestyle and of patterns of thinking and doing to follow Christ as Lord and Savior. To take refuge in God means to be under his protection.

Have you taken refuge in the Lord? Are you doing those things that indicate that you are under his protection? Without holding on to Jesus Christ we aren't protected and we'll suffer God's judgment. The only solution is to take refuge in the Lord...

Because God's Judgment Will Be Final

There are two things that are striking to us about God's judgment on Nineveh in this book of Nahum: first, it is complete and doesn't leave anything in its path. Second, it's final and there's not a second chance (Hebrews 9:27).

Let's look at what the Scripture says in these verses. It describes the total destruction in the face of the Lord's vengeance on Nineveh. Verses 3-5 tell us that God will flatten and demolish everything that stands in his way. There's nobody and there is nothing that escape his judgment and the destruction that goes along with it.

Notice that it is completely useless to try to resist God's judgment. Verse 6 says that there is no one who resists and can endure the heat of his anger. God's judgment is so awful that in Revelation the unbelievers tell the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from God's presence and the Lamb's wrath (Revelation 6). It's a striking image that reinforces how serious and total the judgment is.

I am convinced that if we read and contemplate these Minor Prophets and think about how horrible God's wrath will be, we will be evangelists with a greater sense of urgency to share Jesus with the dying postmodern world where we are the Lord's heralds. If we understood the finality of the Lord's judgment, it would change how we face life. It would transform Christians with the purpose of proclaiming the gospel to others so that God will snatch them from the fire (Jude 23).

The Lord has been merciful and the Day of his Judgment has not yet arrived. But make no mistake: The end will come in an instant, like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2). Are you ready? Have you taken refuge in the Lord Jesus to be saved from the coming judgment? God's judgment was final on Nineveh and it will be final on this earth. Only his people, whom he knows, whom he loves and for whom He is jealous, will survive. May we be found having taken refuge in the Triune God, the only hope in this life and the next.