**GOOD NEWS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE**

Nahum 1:1-15

Key Verse: 1:15 ***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.***

Today we study the book of Nahum. The message of Nahum deals with the fall of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Nineveh first appeared in Gen 10:10. Nimrod, a son of Cush, a grandson of Ham, was known as a mighty warrior. He built the city Nineveh in the plain of Shinar, located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River. Early Nineveh was existed as a city (2000 B.C. – 1360 B.C) and grew as a territorial and then the Assyrian Empire (1360 B.C - 609 B.C.).

Once, God had sent prophet Jonah to Nineveh to preach the message of repentance. Surprisingly the people had responded with humble repentance. Then God withdrew his punishment. God had been using Assyria as the rod of his anger to discipline his people and to punish the surrounding idolatry countries. (Isa 10:5) But she became arrogant, brutal, and wicked and eventually turned to be an enemy of God. In 721 B.C. Assyria destroyed Samaria the city of northern Israel and relocated ten tribes of Israel to their territories and replaced them with their people. For this reason northern Israelites were simply called Samaritans and the gentiles. After this, Assyria conquered upper Egypt (663 B.C., 3:8). She invaded and besieged Judah and blasphemed God, humiliated God’s people. (2Ki 18; Isa 36:14-20) No nation at that time could stand up against her. The kingdom seemed to last forever. Then God’s vision came to Nahum. According to this prophecy, Nineveh was destroyed all of sudden in her golden time by the Babylonians in 612 B.C. So this book was probably written between 663 B.C. (fall of thebes, Egypt) and 612 B.C. (fall of Nineveh).

**I. The Lord is a jealous and avenging God (1-5)**

Look at verse 1. **An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.**

God showed prophet Nahum this message of God's impending judgment on Nineveh. Nahum's name means, "The Lord comforts." This implies that this book is not only the vision of God’s judgment on Nineveh, but the message of God's consolation to Judah. He is called “the Elkoshite,” that is, an inhabitant of Elkosh. Some scholars believe that it was Caper-naum, since the meaning of that name is “Village of Nahum.”

Nahum's vision starts declaring who God is. Look at 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.***

“The Lord is a jealous and avenging God.” Nahum describes God as jealous and avenging. The Lord God is not an emotionless dead wooden sculpture or stone statue. He is living God with a full of emotions. The Lord God has affection and love for his possessions. So he has jealousy, anger, and avenging heart that comes when his possessions are defiled, destroyed or taken away. The whole world belongs to Him, and the human beings in the world are fundamentally His. So God loves them, and He desires for their love and their trust. But when human beings love the world more and rely more on idols than on Him, God feels jealous and fiercely anger. Furthermore, when they becomes an enemy of God and destroys his possessions, God takes vengeance on his foes. **Ex20:5 says, You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.**

As mentioned in verse 3a, of course, God is slow to anger. Look at verse 3a. ***3 The Lord is slow to anger and great in power;*** God told Moses who He is at Mount Sinai. Ex 34:5-7a,*Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished;* God was slow to anger until the day of the flood judgment in Noah’s time. He had been patient with the Northern Israel by sending many prophets. God was slow to anger even to the people of Nineveh who oppressed His people. When they repented, He forgave their sins. Jonah had prayed to God: “I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.”Look at verse 3b. ***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.*** We must not despise God who is slow to anger. When the time of His patience and mercy is over, God will punish the guilty without exception and without mercy, and he will never stop until the punishment is completed. When they depended on foreign nations and idols, God judged even his people terribly and wiped them out. When Nineveh despised God's compassion and grace and became vile and became God's enemy, God's wrath and his vengeance would come upon her as swiftly as chariots and horses rushing, raising clouds of dust, as powerful as whirlwinds and storms that destroy everything. The words Vengeance and wrath are repeated twice, indicating that God's determination is firm.

A couple of days ago I have watched one video clip. She is 95-year-old Ukrainian in Kyiv, a survivor of Soviet-era great famine, the Second World War 1941, and the persecution of Communist rule for 70 years, but it is said she’s “never seen anything as horrible” as the weeks she spent in her Kyiv oblast village since Russia invaded. This is what she witnessed and prayed in tears on Video. “We spent 70 years under this yoke. They’d tell us there was no God and rob our churches. I was big enough to remember. The churches were burning. They’d exile religious people who were doing good deeds and respected others. People who didn’t want evil to exist. We had to live like that for 70 years… And now, God, we want to live as an independent country. Ukrainians had to go there and cultivate your virgin lands. I remember our young people going to Russia to cultivate their land for them. And now they are killing us, shooting at our children. Oh Lord, I’m praying to you. I believe that You have it under control. I believe that You will help us and find a way to deal with P\*tin.”

These days, there are a lot of sins accumulated against God, big and small, seen and unseen. Anger naturally arises in our mind, asking why God allows the wicked to exercise. Here Nahum's oracle is clear. The Lord is a jealous and avenging God. The Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished. Deuteronomy 32:35 says, **“It is mine to avenge; I will repay.”** Paul warns the Christians in Rome: **“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is written: It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”** Indeed as prophesied, God had poured out his wrath and vengeance upon the oppressors and the enemies of God. And he will punish the guilty.

Look at verses 4 and 5. ***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. 5 The mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it.*** God rebukes the sea and dries it up and makes all the rivers run dry. This reminds us that the Red Sea parted and the Jordan River dried up. Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon were considered the essence of natural beauty and fertility. But God lays waste all its glory and fertility. Mountains quake and the hills melt, rocks break. There is no creation that can withstand God's wrath and vengeance.

**II. The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble (6-7)**

Look at verse 6. ***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.*** No one can escape or withstand his indignation. At that time, even the powerful Assyria would not endure God's fierce anger, and even Israel could not escape from His judgment when they forsook God.

Look at verse 7. ***7 The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.*** Only the Lord God is good. He is the refuge in times of trouble to those who repent of their sins and trust in Him. In fact, this world has been accumulating its sins day after the day. God's wrath has been also piling up throughout human history. All have been sinning against God and fallen short of the glory of God. There is no one, righteous in the world. The apostle Paul depicts the wrath of God in Rom 1:18. **“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”** Who can save us from God's impending wrath? God's wrath is terrifying, and the judgment of the last days is merciless and thorough. Only God is good and the refuge for those who trust in him. God sent his Son Jesus to this world, and whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. Throughout the Bible, there are several major and minor events in which God's wrath was soberly and thoroughly executed. Among them is the flood judgment in Noah’s time. But if I had to pick the only one, it was the crucifixion of Jesus. God poured out his anger and wrath thoroughly upon His innocent Son, Jesus. Jesus took and bore the wrath of God for all our sins in His body. He became the object of God's wrath on our behalf, and was forsaken by God and died in our place. To those who believe that God loved them so much and sent Jesus as their Savior, and to those who believe that God raised Jesus from the dead as the Lord and the Judge of all creations, God is and will be their refuge in the days of trouble. Let us trust in the Lord Jesus and take refuge in Him all the times. Praise the Lord. We pray that You may be the refuge especially to Ukrainians and Russians who trust in You. We pray that we may fear God, the God of judgment and the God of salvation, worship and obey You with joy and thanks.

**III. Look the One who brings good news! (8-15)**

This part tells about the destruction of Nineveh and deliverance of Judah. At that time, Nahum's prophecy was hard to believe. But the fall of Nineveh is described very specifically. Look at verses 8-10. ***8 but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh; he will pursue his foes into darkness.******9 Whatever they plot against the Lord he will bring to an end; trouble will not come a second time. 10 They will be entangled among thorns and drunk from their wine; they will be consumed like dry stubble.***According to Ctesias, a Greek historian in the fifth century B.C., while a drunken feast were going on in Nineveh, a sudden inundation of the Tigris River swept away the city gates and washed away the foundations of the palace, thus the flood enabled Babylonian army to enter and burn the city. They were trapped by the river which was their defense, and Nineveh was consumed like dry stubble.

Look at verse 11. ***11 From you, O Nineveh, has one come forth who plots evil against the Lord and counsels wickedness.***  Here, the one who plots evil against the Lord is considered to be Assyrian King Sennacherib. When King Sennacherib invaded Judah, his pride reached to the sky as he plotted evil, saying to the people in Judah, 18 “Do not let Hezekiah mislead you when he says, ‘The Lord will deliver us.’ Have the gods of any nations ever delivered their lands from the hand of the king of Assyria? 19 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they rescued Samaria from my hand? 20 Who of all the gods of these countries have been able to save their lands from me? How then can the Lord deliver Jerusalem from my hand?” In this way he ridiculed and blasphemed God and told Judah to surrender. (Isa36:13-20) When King Hezekiah prayed with all his heart to God, in the night the angel of the LORD put to death 185,000 soldiers in the Assyrian camp. The people found next morning all the dead bodies. So King Sennacherib returned to Nineveh and got killed by his sons.

Look at verses 12-13. ***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. 13 Now I will break their yoke from your neck and tear your shackles away."*** God declared that there will be no more affliction to them. In the past God had used Assyria as his rod to afflict them due to their sins, but now God will afflict them no more by breaking the rod. By doing this, he makes them know that there is no other gods but Him and makes them trust in Him only.

Look at verse 14. ***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."***

God declared that the name of Nineveh would be blotted out so that it would never be used again in history and all its gods and idols would be destroyed and buried. As God said, Nineveh had long disappeared in history until the city of Nineveh was discovered by archaeologists. Until then it had been thought that Nineveh in the Bible was a made-up story.

Look at verse 15. ***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.***

Nahum calls us to “Look there on the mountains. Someone is coming on the mountains bringing good news.” Then the one shouts to the people at the foot of the mountains with great joy. **Peace!** The good news is: Peace has come. This peace can be interpreted as being freed from Assyrian oppression. But fundamentally it means that peace with God has come. God's wrath has ended, and God's comfort and peace have come. This is a real good news. Because of their sins, God had afflicted them, but now God has accepted their tears and repentance and has forgiven them. So now Judah is able to celebrate the festivals to God and fulfill her vows to God. What a good news this is!

However, this prophecy of verse 15 was not fully fulfilled in Nahum's time. Because they again trusted in other nations than God and listened to false prophets, Jerusalem and God’s Temple were destroyed by the Babylonians and their tearful exiles began. Therefore, this good news had been postponed. Prophet Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah chapters 52-53 when, how, and by whom this prophecy would be fulfilled. This good news would be brought by the One who took up our iniquity and bore our sufferings. He proclaimed, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!’ He brought us the peace with God forever and ever. Praise the Lord Jesus Christ!!

Apostle Paul quoted this prophecy of Nahum in Romans 10 and expanded on this meaning to all the ones who brings good news to the whole world. In Christ Jesus, we have peace with God and serve and worship God with joy and fearlessly and voluntarily devote ourselves to the Lord. More than that God calls us to bring this good news to the world. “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” I pray that this prophecy may come true through me and you until the Lord comes.