

## ***The Cloud of Witnesses***

### **Nahum**

#### **Lesson 1: Nahum – Behold, your God! Behold, our God!**

##### **Reading: Nahum 1:1-8**

If you want people to serve the Living God, let them see a true picture of who He really is. People today stand in more awe of the President of the United States, the Monarch of England or their own nation's political leader than God. The trouble is that this attitude has crept into the Church too.

Nahum was trying to get the attention of the pagan Ninevites – the people of Nineveh; those who lived in the city that we read Jonah went to approximately 200 years earlier. (Jonah chose a more dramatic approach to evangelism.) Pagans need to be introduced to 'Someone' who is greater than any of their contemporaries, leaders, experiential idols, or gods – including power and money.

In this first chapter, Nahum adopts a very interesting strategy. As we see in verse two, he reveals that God is a jealous and avenging God, who takes vengeance against His foes and maintains wrath against His enemies. Nahum continues with this until verse seven where he 'opens a window'. *"The Lord is good, a Refuge in times of trouble"* – but there is an apparent proviso – *"He cares for those who trust in Him, but with an overwhelming flood He will make an end of Nineveh; He will pursue His foes into darkness."*

Firstly, Nahum elevates God in the eyes and comprehension of his hearers.

Secondly, he pronounces the righteous anger of God against sin and wickedness.

Thirdly, he reveals the other side to God, where He protects and cares for those who trust and follow Him.

Fourthly, he warns the people that there is no escape from the sentence pronounced by God.

Maybe there are some hints here for us to consider when trying to reach out to the secular people of today. Instead of trying to win people over by the 'God is your friend' approach, maybe we actually need to re-establish the Holiness of a Righteous God who finds sin, rebellion and independence abhorrent.

I am the last to advocate that God is a vindictive schoolmaster, just ready to lash out at every misdemeanour, but I do feel that sometimes we overlook and fail to declare that Our Loving Saviour, Redeemer, is also totally Righteous and Holy. He is still a *Jealous* God. However, declaring His awesome holiness can and should be done in a loving and gracious way.

Maybe, if we 'opened that window' occasionally, people would allow the Light of Christ to penetrate their darkness, and we would see more captives released from their prisons.

Why not give it a try? What do you think?

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### **Nahum would say to us today...**

Most people have a very limited and subjective view of who God really is. It is our job to reveal the true character of God as described in the Scriptures.

### **Prayer**

*Father, I thank You that You are not like any other gods, nor are You human like us. Please help me remember that although You allow me to address You as My Heavenly Father, You are still the Creator of the Universe and Holy, Holy, Holy. Please help me to describe You more accurately to those who want to get to know You, so that they respond appropriately to Your mercy and grace. Amen.*

### **Additional Readings**

- Psalm 2
- Isaiah 55:1-9
- Revelation 1:12-18

### **Questions**

1. Why is it important for us to describe the full character of God?
2. What are the ramifications if we only reveal God as a friend in need?
3. How can we balance justice and mercy in our presentation of the Good News?

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### **Lesson 2: Nahum – The Lord will restore the splendour of Jacob**

#### **Reading: Nahum 2:1-13**

This is Good News for Judah.

It began, *“Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings ‘Good News’, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, and fulfil your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed”* (1: 15).

It was Good News for Judah and Israel, and it is also Good News for us. It proclaimed the day when the people would no longer be dominated or terrified by the wicked Assyrians. Rather, the rest of the chapter graphically describes the full force of Assyria’s devastation.

Yes, Assyria had ravaged Israel and Judah, but the Lord was the One who had allowed it. However, it was not appropriate for the Assyrians to become arrogant and feel that it was their right to do just what they liked because of who they were. God was not exonerating their wickedness – far from it. The Assyrians had been used as a purging reminder to God’s people to return to Him, but that did not give them licence to treat Israel and Judah indiscriminately.

Jesus reminds us, *“Don’t judge, or you too will be judged. For the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you”* (Matthew 7: 1 – 2). Nineveh and the Assyrians thought they had open slather to do what they liked with Israel and Judah. But not so – God was watching.

How important our attitudes and actions are. Even if we have success over our opposition, we are not to gloat and force that victory home by inappropriateness, selfish ambition or arrogance.

On the Day of Judgement we shall stand and give account for all our idle words (Matthew 12: 36). God watches all we do and we are accountable for it, whether we are Christians or not. Yes, even as Christians we are not exempt.

But the Good News for those of us who are discouraged, suffering condemnation and attacked by circumstances and enemy action – the Promise of God for you and me is this – *“The Lord will restore the splendour of Jacob... though destroyers have laid them waste and have ruined their vines.”*

Listen, God will restore your self-worth, your self-esteem and your security. He will deliver. He is watching. He knows all you are going through and will reveal Himself to you again.

More than that, He will restore the vines. He will restore to you the joy of the Lord and the joy of your Salvation. Hold on, no matter how strong the enemy, how desperate your circumstances, how unlikely it seems your real joy will be to return, how impossible it is to realise the dream, vision or promise God has given you.

Make sure that you keep your eyes on Jesus. Hold on to Him and His Word, and wait.

Our God is mightier. He is all mighty and will come to your aid and will restore your *“splendour.”*

The best is yet to come. That’s a promise.

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### **Nahum would say to us today...**

Never forget, that in the midst of your darkest hour, God still knows, still cares and will come to your aid.

### **Prayer**

*Thank You, Father, for being our constant companion and friend. Thank You so much that when we go through the tough times, You don't leave us. Thank You for being totally trustworthy, and thank You for making everything work together for the good of those that love You. Amen.*

### **Additional Readings**

- 1 Peter 5:6-11
- Psalm 77:1-15
- Hebrews 13:5-21

### **Questions**

1. How can we hold on to hope when everything seems to be going against us?
2. What can we do to reinforce our hope in God?
3. How should we treat those who behave badly towards us?