

# Nahum

## Chapter One

### Introduction

I consider Nahum a children's story.

Maybe it would be more accurate to call it a story about children. It is about the children in the Assyrian city of Nineveh.

God had sent Jonah to Nineveh to announce its imminent destruction. As a result of Jonah's preaching, the population of the entire city turned to the Lord in genuine repentance and faith. God spared the city. As Jonah sat, complaining to God about having spared the city, God said to him,

Jonah 4:11 "...should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left..."

The one hundred and twenty thousand persons mentioned were the children in Nineveh. God had compassion upon the children.

Nahum picks up the story of those children and their descendants. His book was written about one hundred and fifty years after the great revival. The parents were saved, but by the third generation after the revival, their descendants were as wicked as ever. Nahum announced the total and complete destruction of Nineveh.

It is clear that the revival did not result in the transmitting of saving faith to their children. The transmitting of faith to children is a problem highlighted in other areas of Scripture. In the Book of Judges there is a pattern that goes like this:

1. A generation accepts the Lord.
2. Their children in the next generation are apathetic toward the Lord.
3. Their children's children in the third generation are apostates who turn away from the Lord.

This pattern may explain what happened in Nineveh. By the third generation after the greatest revival recorded in the history of the world, Nineveh would be destroyed.

If you are saved, you want your children and their children after them to be saved. It's not automatic; your children are free moral agents who must choose for themselves to receive or reject Jesus Christ. Still, you *can* and *should* exert a powerful influence in their decision to receive or reject Jesus as you rehearse your own revival and relationship with the Lord to them.

As we work through Nahum and the details of the destruction of Nineveh, we want to focus on the necessity of rehearsing our relationship with Jesus to our children. It begins in chapter one where we will see two things: #1 Share With Your Kids That God's Salvation Is Their Stronghold In This Sinful World, and #2 Show Your Kids That Serving God Is Their Satisfaction In This Sinful World.

## #1 Share With Your Kids That God's Salvation Is Their Stronghold In This Sinful World

(v1-11)

You are told in verse one that this is "the burden against Nineveh," but you aren't introduced to Nineveh until verse nine. The first eight verses, although applicable to Nineveh, are more universal. They describe the longsuffering of a holy God with all sinners on the earth. God's longsuffering with all sinners is marvelous, but it will end, and He will return in great power to judge sin and sinners. In the meantime it would be wise to flee *to* God *from* sin. Verses seven and eight put this into perspective, saying,

Nahum 1:7 The LORD *is* good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.

Nahum 1:8 But with an overflowing flood He will make an utter end of its place, and darkness will pursue His enemies.

God's salvation is the only true stronghold in a sinful world that is headed for judgment and destruction. You need to get saved; and, if you have children, you will want them to get saved.

Nahum 1:1 The burden against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

Very little is known about Nahum. His name means “comfort,” and his prophecy about the destruction of Nineveh would be a comfort to devout Jews who had been persecuted by the Assyrians. The exact location of Nahum’s hometown, Elkosh, is unknown.

Nahum begins his book by painting a vivid picture of God’s wrath against sin. If you listen closely, it sounds like he is speaking words of comfort to God’s people who find themselves surrounded by sinners. In verses two and three you hear about the comfort of God’s *jealousy*, and in verses three through six you hear about the comfort of God’s *judgment*.

The comfort of God’s jealousy:

Nahum 1:2 God *is* jealous, and the LORD avenges; the LORD avenges and *is* furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves *wrath* for His enemies;

We normally think of jealousy as being wrong. Jealousy can be good, a very positive, healthy motivation when it works to preserve and protect something precious. In these verses God is portrayed as being jealous for the Jews; and, by extension, He is jealous for you. He works to preserve and protect you in this sinful world because you are precious to Him. Your enemies are His enemies. He will “avenge,” “take vengeance,” and “reserve His wrath” against your enemies.

Why were the Jews still suffering? Why do *you* still suffer?

Nahum 1:3 The LORD *is* slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*. The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of His feet.

God’s longsuffering with sinners takes precedence over your temporary suffering at the hands of sinners. The Book of Jonah reveals God’s will for sinners: He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But He cannot simply “acquit” them from sin. If sinners fail to repent and turn to Him in faith, He is coming to judge them.

You and I are comforted by God’s jealousy – knowing that our light affliction is but for a moment as God works to save others for eternity.

The comfort of God’s judgment:

Nahum 1:4 He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither, and the flower of Lebanon wilts.

Nahum 1:5 The mountains quake before Him, the hills melt, and the earth heaves at His presence, yes, the world and all who dwell in it.

Nahum 1:6 Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.

This is poetic language to remind God's people that He is awesome in power. He controls the weather when it suits Him; He creates unusual and miraculous physical events. No sinner can withstand His coming judgment.

His coming judgment is a comfort to you. God can and will judge sinners. If He is waiting, and you are surrounded by them, then He has not abandoned you. He can and will use even the wicked to perfect you and make you more like Jesus.

Verses seven and eight are a general summary of life on earth:

Nahum 1:7 The LORD *is* good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.

Nahum 1:8 But with an overflowing flood He will make an utter end of its place, and darkness will pursue His enemies.

“The day of trouble” is a summary of your life on the earth! In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for Jesus has overcome the world. Those who “trust” in Him will be preserved through trouble. Those who are His enemies, and your enemies, He will “pursue” and bring to everlasting “darkness.”

These general principles are now applied to Nineveh, beginning in verse nine:

Nahum 1:9 What do you conspire against the LORD? He will make an utter end *of it*. Affliction will not rise up a second time.

Nahum 1:10 For while tangled *like* thorns, and while drunken *like* drunkards, they shall be devoured like stubble fully dried.

Nahum 1:11 From you comes forth *one* who plots evil against the LORD, a wicked counselor.

The one who “conspire[d] against the Lord” and who “comes forth... plots evil... [the] wicked counselor” was the Assyrian empire. The words used here would remind the Jews of the story of the Assyrian siege against Jerusalem, recorded in Second Kings chapters eighteen and nineteen. After the Assyrians had destroyed forty-two

outlying cities, they encamped against Jerusalem. King Hezekiah of Judah sought the Lord and the angel of the Lord slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrian soldiers as they slept. The army withdrew. They would not “rise up a second time.”

Nahum lays down general principles about God’s jealousy and judgment, then applies them to a specific situation to show the Jews that “the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.” This is a good model to follow in sharing with your kids. Share with them stories of God’s faithfulness in caring for you despite the wickedness that sought to overthrow your life.

Let’s focus in on the idea of a “stronghold.” The picture I get is the Assyrian army encamped around Jerusalem, about to destroy it. The Jews were safe inside because Jerusalem was God’s stronghold.

It’s a metaphor of life on earth for the believer. You are surrounded by enemies in this sinful world – to say nothing of the enemy within, your sin nature. God’s salvation is your stronghold. You have His presence and the privileges of a personal relationship with Him. These turn your enemies away and fill you with joy.

Your kids need to know that the world is their enemy, and that salvation is their stronghold. And they need to understand that salvation is a stronghold of the protection and peace of a personal relationship with God – not the prison of a rules-and-regulations religion.

## #2 Show Your Kids That Serving God Is Their Satisfaction In This Sinful World (v12-15)

In the remaining verses of chapter one Nahum reveals that life has *mysteries* but you have a *mission* that overcomes all mysteries.

### Life’s mysteries:

Nahum 1:12 Thus says the LORD: “Though *they are* safe, and likewise many, yet in this manner they will be cut down when he passes through. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more;

Nahum 1:13 For now I will break off his yoke from you, and burst your bonds apart.”

Nahum 1:14 The LORD has given a command concerning you: “Your name shall be perpetuated no longer. Out of the house of your gods I will cut off the carved image and the molded image. I will dig your grave, for you are vile.”

God declares that He would “cut down” and “cut off” the Assyrians. He would “dig [their] grave.” He would destroy them.

The mystery is in the words, “though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more.” Those words are spoken to the Jews. The mystery is that God used the wicked Assyrians to afflict His own people – to discipline them for their own good and His glory.

Life is filled with these mysteries. You are surrounded by evil and enemies. God is jealous over you, but uses evil and enemies to His advantage in order to perfect you.

You cannot solve all of the mysteries you will encounter. You are not called to solve them, but to serve in spite of them. You have a mission. Your mission is to serve God and to find satisfaction in your life by serving God.

Your mission:

Nahum 1:15 Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace! O Judah, keep your appointed feasts, perform your vows. For the wicked one shall no more pass through you; he is utterly cut off.

The opening phrase regarding the “feet of him who brings good tidings” is also found in the Book of Isaiah. It is eventually quoted by the apostle Paul in the Book of Romans. It is generally applied as an encouragement to preach the Gospel as you are walking through the world. Your “feet” are glorious in that they carry you to those who need to hear about God’s salvation from sin. You “proclaim peace” to them. The Gospel brings sinners peace with God.

How do you go about your mission? If you were a Jew, you kept the “feasts” and performed “your vows.” You were active in serving God as He had laid it out in the Old Testament.

If you are a Christian, you are to be active serving God as He has laid it out for you in the New Testament. You are to offer yourself to Him as a living sacrifice; discover your spiritual gifts; stir-up your gifts; and

serve Him by serving others. And you are to find lasting satisfaction in your serving God.

You will never be satisfied in the world, or with the things of the world. Serving God is the only true source of satisfaction. You can and should share this with your kids... *But you must also show it to them!*

Your kids will grow up knowing what you truly value. Make sure that you value eternal things, the rewards to come, rather than things that the world offers. Show your kids the joy of walking with Jesus through life's mysteries.

## Conclusion

A three-word summary of our thoughts this morning would be "Saved to serve." **You** were saved to serve; you want **your kids** to get saved and serve.

Salvation is an individual decision to receive Jesus Christ. But you exert a powerful influence over your kids. You put life in perspective for them.

You should put life in a biblical perspective: We're surrounded by evil and enemies, but God is our spiritual stronghold. His longsuffering with sinners means we will sometimes suffer; but when we do, it's for our good and His glory. Wherever we go, whatever we do, we're to serve Him and discover our satisfaction in serving.