

---

Day 203 - July 22

---

## Judah after Israel's Fall (725-585 BCE)

### *Nahum's Prophecy against Nineveh*

Readings: *Nahum 1:1-3:19*

#### **Reflections:**

- As we come to Nahum, unless we understand the historical context, again we are tempted to think God is just an angry God who gets mad at the slightest thing. In reality, Nineveh is practicing some of the most horrid acts of merciless violence imaginable. In 650 BCE, five decades after Sennacherib's army is destroyed by God, new powers have arisen within Nineveh. Sennacherib was assassinated in 681 BCE and his son Esarhaddon took power and reigned for 11 years. Manasseh's first captivity and release may have happened during Esarhaddon's reign. In 669 BCE Esarhaddon is succeeded by Ashurbanipal, a terribly barbarous leader who attacks both Palestine and Egypt, destroying the city of Thebes. In their unbelievable cruelty the historical records of this time will show that they boiled their victims alive in oil, skinned them alive, and maimed them mercilessly. It is some 125 years after the story of Jonah made Nineveh the focus of how much God loves the nations of the world. Now we see the mind-blowing evil of a nation that will fall under God's judgment. Although God loves all nations and all people, he is still a holy God that is outraged against this kind of brutality.
- Nahum opens with an important verse for us to understand the character of God. "The Lord is slow to anger and great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished." We must never confuse the grace and mercy of God with a license to do whatever we want. His grace and mercy must lead us to humility and surrender to his will. If we remain proud, abusive and defiant, in time his grace will pass and we will have chosen to stand under his judgment. He is God.
- Nahum goes on to say: "The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. 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." Again we see the mercy and holiness of God, his tenderness and power.
- God's judgment against his enemies is good news to his people, those who are humble of heart. It is the proud and violent who oppress and abuse the weak. "Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaim peace." Within the

story of Israel, it is God's judgment against an incredibly violent nation that is the good news. When Jesus, the Messiah comes, it will be the good news of God's mercy triumphing over judgment and of the new kingdom that will bring a new way of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace to our broken world (Isaiah 52:7; Romans 10:15).

- In Nahum 3:3-11 it is interesting that the prophet speaks about Nineveh's attack on Egypt and her hideous cruelty against one of Israel's ancient enemies. This reminds us again that God does not simply categorically reject people. In fact, he has a heart of mercy for all people, even those who live as his enemies.
- As we learn again in the prophecy of Nahum, there is a time when God's patience runs out and his judgment falls. "Nothing can heal your wound; your injury is fatal." Let us take this to heart and celebrate the incredible gift of grace we have been offered in Jesus!