

Nahum 1; 3:1-7; I Cor. 15:24-26; The End of God's Enemies I. The Reason for this Book II. The Wickedness of the Ninevites III. The Attributes of God

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is in charge in this world? Who controls the rise and fall of every nation- even the rise of a great, wicked and rebellious nation? For example, did God remain in control when the Nazi army rolled over Europe? Does God continue to control the Communist Chinese and does His hand hold the future election in our old land? When considering the rise and fall of nations, we learn already in the book of Daniel that kingdoms come and go- but there is only one kingdom that will stand established- and that is the kingdom of our God! Today as we come to the prophet Nahum, we find the downfall of one of Israel's worst enemies- her most cruel oppressor- the nation of Assyria and the city of Nineveh. In our human circles- very few people like to take responsibility when things go wrong.

Everyone takes credit when something goes right- but when new a bridge is not built according to code and it needs to be demolished- no one wants to be responsible for that. Well- today we find that our God promises the destruction of the wicked as He comes in justice. Our God not only sends promises of peace and protection, He is also responsible for the destruction of the wicked. When this city is destroyed- it is by God's hand! Today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ reveals the good news in the destruction of God's enemies in this book of Nahum.

I. The Reason for this Book

In our first point, we look into the reason that this book was written. As you will remember, two weeks ago we read from the book of Jonah. In Jonah, this same city was in view. Jonah was a hesitant prophet- he did not want to go to these people to proclaim the message from the LORD. But after the storm and fish- Jonah eventually goes. After his short sermon, the Ninevites believe the message and repent of their sins. God in His grace and mercy- being slow to anger and abounding in love as Jonah accused God of being- withheld the promised destruction. The 40-day period came and went- and the city was not overthrown by fire but rather they were overturned in their hearts by the Spirit. God was pleased in His mercy

to withhold- or suspend His just destruction but only for a time. Evidently, the repentance of this city was only temporary. After Jonah, 150 years have passed. Now we come to Nahum- and transgressions of the Ninevites is now full- their iniquity is fully blossomed- they will soon be obliterated by Babylon in 612 BC. The destruction will be so complete, that even the location of this city was not known again until recently- as 1:14 says- even their name will no longer be perpetuated. It will be wiped off the map- and no one will cower before them again. Although His mercy and compassion are long- He is also the God who will by no means clear the guilty as 1:3 reads. Although the name Nahum means comfort- there will be no comfort for these Assyrians. Rather, Nahum takes the posture similar to that of Obadiah in his book concerning the Edomites. Specifically- the content of this book is promising the destruction of God's enemies- wherever they may be- but specifically seen in this wicked city of Nineveh. This city and the people within are not going to be destroyed because they are Gentiles- as Jonah had to learn. Nor are they going to be destroyed because they have great wealth and a strong army. No- destruction will come because of their wicked deeds and rebellion- they plotted against the LORD as 1:11 puts it. So to answer the question- why was this book written? Basically, this book answers the question- what will happen to God's enemies? What will become of those who exalt themselves against the LORD and His anointed one of Psalm 2? Will God allow the wicked to remain unpunished? The answer should be clear- No! Because God is just- and His justice demands that all sin must be met with justice, wrath and vengeance!

II. The Wickedness of the Ninevites

So in our second point, we consider what had the Ninevites done to arouse God's anger- which actions had they performed that made them a stench in the nose of the LORD? Well- let's look at ch. 3. Verse 1 opens by identifying Nineveh as a blood city- full of lies and plunder. The city of Nineveh is full of shed blood. Now we know from history that the Assyrian army was perhaps one of the most brutal. They had no problem shedding the blood of innocent people- they would kill then by the thousands. Added to that, they took pleasure in the dismemberment and mutilation of their enemies. Not only did their army rule

by- but in their own city their kings ruled by terror! Heaps of corpses in v. 3- piles of dead bodies. It was common for kings to dine in the presence of their decapitated enemies. Added to this, v. 1 says that Nineveh was a place of trickery and deceit. They would tell lies- and steal- taking plunder from cities they had conquered and stealing from others as able. She was a hypocrite on the world stage. Continuing in v. 4- they were known for spreading their prostitution. Because of its wealth and power- Nineveh succeeded in deporting her cult prostitution to many other countries. In this way, she corrupted the entire Middle East. We find a similar description of Babylon in Revelation 17- who spreads her prostitution to the nations. A few more acts of the Ninevites are found back in ch. 1- in 1:11 we found that they plotted evil against the LORD. This may be a reference to their plot to do harm to the nation of Israel or Judah- to attack God's people with their military as Sennacherib did in II Kings 18 when he ridiculed the God of Israel with his words at the city gates of Jerusalem. Or this evil plot could be a conscious decision to lead God's people astray with their prostitution and idolatry. These worthless, or evil ones of v. 11 are also found in Judges 19 as the men from the city of Gibeah who tried to force themselves on the traveling Levite. Whatever these worthless men did- they were rebelling against the LORD and plotting evil with their words. The city was full of temples to idols- carved images and graven gods of gold and silver. The whole city was aflame with rebellious passions and desires- and because of this- the Lord was against them as 2:13 says. I am against you- will cut you off and you shall be devoured.

III. The Attributes of God

Now that we understand why this city and nation was going to be destroyed- in our last point we consider the various attributes of God that Nahum reveals in this short book. The first attribute is that of justice- in 1:2- the LORD is a jealous and avenging- wrathful and vengeance taking God! The fact is, sin must be dealt with! God is just- and His justice demands that sin committed against His supreme majesty be met with supreme wrath! He is an avenging God- returning on the heads of those what they have done to others. He will pursue His enemies- 1:8- making a complete end of His adversaries. This is not a God to be trifled

with- He is a consuming fire! He will cut them town- 1:12- so that they pass away. Nahum is clear- God is powerful in His might and terrible in His wrath! His justice is hot and His anger aroused against all who rebel against Him! His power is also seen in 1:4-5- He rebukes the sea and drives up the rivers- the mountains quake before Him as we saw in Micah last week. He is able to do all according to His will- and His holy will demands wrath for sinners. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God as Heb. 10 puts it. The first application of this attribute should be wake up sinners- God is not to be trifled with! But He is also the God of mercy- as 1:3 says- He is slow to anger and great in power. He is powerful in His justice- and powerful in His mercy! Quoting from Exodus 34- He is slow to anger and abounding love- but He will in no way clear the guilty. Or again in 1:7- the LORD is good- a stronghold in the day of trouble- the LORD knows those who take refuge in Him! Yes, God's justice demands His wrath- but He has also provided a way of escape for us! Prov. 18- the name of the LORD is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are saved! The LORD knows those who are His as II Tim. 2 says- those who belong to Him- those who trust in Him- and for these there is deliverance and salvation from the fire to come! This is where we find hope in this book! The name of Nahum means comfort- and the message of this book is given to be a source of comfort! Now you may be wondering- what is the comfort here? Where is the good news- when this whole city which is full of sin is going to be overthrown and destroyed? Well- let's read 1:15 again! There is good news because a messenger has brought a proclamation of peace! Now this might seem strange to our ears- but follow the thought. For those who are under the refuge of God- those who have received the forgiveness of sins- these have experienced the mercy and compassion of God- a refuge is found in Him. Our sins are forgiven- the wrath of God which as upon us has been satisfied by the suffering and death of Jesus in our place. In that way we have peace. These words- the feet of him who brings good news- are found also in Isaiah 52:7. Isaiah 52 continues to identify the coming One who will comfort God's people- who will reveal the salvation of our God. But there is another aspect to this peace- God's people not only have peace because Jesus has brought peace between us and God- we also look

forward to the time when the war will be over- when all of God's enemies will be brought to an end. The good news is that the foe will finally be put down- never to rise again! And that is what soon happened to Assyria- they were destroyed and their destruction meant that they would harass God's people no more! There is good news for the church- because all of God's enemies will be met with this same powerful judgment. Vengeance is mine- I will repay- the Lord said in Rom. 12! We can leave room for the wrath of God- knowing that the Judge of the Earth will do what is right! We need not take matters in our own hand- this frees us to be kind to – even pray for our earthly enemies! And to have a firm confidence that our sworn enemies will not succeed! The Devil's schemes will not succeed- and even death- death will be defeated! As we read earlier from I Cor. 15- all the enemies of Christ will be placed under his feet- and Christ will reign until even death- that last enemy- will be destroyed! So there is good news- news of peace- to be heard in the church. The enemies of God cannot win- the gates of hell will not prevail! God's judgment is good news unless you are an enemy of God! We read of the same theme in Psalm 2- the nations rise and plot in vain. But you had better kiss the Son- or be terrified by His wrath! This is an invitation to humble yourself before the Lord- find refuge in Him- forgiveness in the blood of the Son- lest you too be terrified by His wrath when He comes on that last day!

Now as we come to the celebration of the Lord's Supper- we are mindful of the peace that we now have because of Jesus Christ! He is our good news- it is by His one sacrifice that we now receive the very mercy, goodness and peace! But the Lord's Supper also comes with a warning, doesn't it! Come with a heart of faith and understanding- lest you eat and drink judgment on yourself and your punishment be made the heavier! Let those who know and embrace Jesus as their Savior rejoice in the promise of final victory over all of our foes. Jesus Christ reveals the good news in the destruction of God's enemies in this book of Nahum. Praise God for the deliverance from this destruction that we now have through Jesus Christ our Lord!