

Kings and Prophets 16-04-07

This is Thursday, the 7th of April 2016, a couple of days before my oldest daughter's birthday. We continue our study of kings and prophets, and we will look tonight at the prophecy of Nahum, to which you can be turning. Nahum, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, where we recently were.

We trekked backward in pages, but perhaps slightly forward in time, or at least contemporaneous, in my view, to the book of Nahum. Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, and then we'll begin. Father, Your promises to us are so precious, the truth that You have given to us, establishing our privileges in coming before You in prayer, in living before You in the light of Your Word, standing before You in confidence because of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These things establish the purpose and the meaning of our lives. We're grateful for the fullness of Your revelation that we have before us. We thank You for this portion of Your Word that we study tonight, the book of Nahum, and we ask Your blessing on us as we do so.

May Your Holy Spirit illuminate these truths for each one of us in a meaningful and beneficial way to motivate us and to encourage us to make the most of the time that You have assigned us in this life. May each one find not only encouragement and motivation, but also light for the path in making decisions, establishing priorities, and pursuing goals as we endeavor to redeem the time because we know our days are evil. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, the book of Nahum is much easier to get into once you see what it has to say in overview. So we're going to quickly survey it.

It's a short book. It only takes up three and a half pages in my Bible. And as I look at it, it says the book of Nahum up at the top of page 1204 in my Thompson Chain Reference Bible.

And directly underneath the chapter 1 heading, it says the burden of Nineveh, the majesty of God, the goodness to His people, and severity against His enemies. I look at chapter 2 and it says the destruction of Nineveh. Judah and Israel are punished.

God sends feared armies against their enemies. When I look at chapter 3 on the following page, it says the woe of Nineveh. Now the book's only got three chapters.

And as I look at these chapter headings, I see Nineveh on chapter 1, I see Nineveh on chapter 2, and I see Nineveh on chapter 3. So I ask myself, Nineveh, what comes to my mind when I hear of the city of Nineveh? What comes to your mind? As soon as you hear the word Nineveh, and by the way, verse 1, chapter 1, the burden against Nineveh. Even before I get the prophet's name, it's Nineveh. So what's the very first thing that comes to your mind? I say Nineveh, you say Jonah.

Absolutely. Now here's what's interesting to me, especially in the light of my own highly

scientific dating of this book to the reign of Josiah just prior to the exit of the southern kingdom of Judah into captivity under Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. By the way, we know from history that the destruction of Nineveh took place circa 612 B.C. Think about your dates now.

Northern Kingdom went out 721 B.C. when the Assyrian incursion took place, the days of Hezekiah. Northern Kingdom goes out 721 B.C. This would be roughly 100 years later in the days of Josiah. When does the southern kingdom begin going out under the three successive incursions of Nebuchadnezzar? 605, 597, 586, 587.

Those dates fluctuate. People have asked me, why do you say 586 and they say 587 and so on? Because the Jewish calendar does not follow our calendar. When I say such and such a year B.C., I'm talking according to our calendar, our 12-month calendar.

Of course, the Jews calendar does not coincide, does it? Whether you're looking at the religious or the civil calendar, you either have a New Year's Day in the spring, which is Nisan, Abib, or in the fall, Tishri and so on. Don't worry about a misalignment of one year's time. It just depends if you can nail down the month or not.

At any rate, here we are in the time of Josiah looking at the prophets who are prophesying. How many of you have read enough to see over and over again, and I see this over and over again and I do not understand it, people using the verb prophesying. I have seen that like a dozen or 15 times over the last few years.

He was prophesying in the days of prophesying. Well, anyway, I don't have time to vent my frustration with that, but here we are. You remember when we did Jonah, it was pretty much the first prophet we covered, right? The first of the minor writing prophets.

Of course, you've got Elijah and Elisha and so on. We've surveyed all that, but you can't help but think in terms of bookends. You begin with a prophecy having to do with Nineveh.

You end pretty much with a prophecy having to do with Nineveh. This is why I've chosen to put Nahum here, because it has a wonderful symmetry. So, just to put Nineveh in its context, flip back just a couple of pages to Jonah.

The word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their wickedness has come up before me. The whole theme of the book of Jonah is that God sends a prophet with a prophecy to Nineveh because of their wickedness. What happens, in short? How would you summarize these four chapters? It takes a while for Jonah to get there, but when he does, they can't fall down on their faces fast enough.

They can't heap the dust and ashes and sackcloth on themselves fast enough, themselves and their animals. And because of that, what does God do? He does not destroy the city. So, in chapter 3, verse 10 of Jonah, God saw their works that they turned from their evil way, and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

God says, you're wicked, I'm going to destroy you. They repent in sackcloth and ashes. God sees those works, and He relents and does not judge them.

What have we talked about the past couple of Thursday night sessions in terms of what these prophets with their prophecies create? They create a dividing point, don't they? They stand in the road, and the road forks. And what are the two destinations of the road now? Deliverance or judgment. God pronounces what on Nineveh? Judgment.

But they repent, and what happens? They are delivered. He relents, and they have more time. And this is early, early on.

You have to wonder if there had been any news of the 186,000, you know, that same God. Not only did He destroy our army, but now He says He's going to destroy our city. I mean, there may be some back story to this.

We don't know exactly when Jonah was. What we do know is these people can't fall down in repentance fast enough, and when God sees that, He relents. What else do we know about the book of Jonah? The book of Jonah wasn't published in Assyria, was it? Who ends up with the book? Who ends up with the story? Who is the story directed to and provided for? The southern kingdom of Judah, right? That's who gets it.

That's who hears it. That's who keeps it. That's who reads it.

That's who knows that story, right? Doesn't do the northern kingdom any good. They're gone. It's the southern kingdom that has this story of Jonah.

By the way, who does Jonah prophesy to, in case you've got any doubts? What does the prophet have to say? What king does he mention? We just covered it last time. The borders are going to be extended according to the word of the prophet Jonah. Who was that? Where was that? What does the prophet say? Maybe we better look at it again.

2 Kings 14.25. This is Jeroboam II reigning in the northern kingdom. He did evil in the sight of the Lord, did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, which made Israel sin. This is 2 Kings 14.25. He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which he spoke through his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet from Gathhefer.

The Lord saw the affliction of Israel, which is very bitter. There was neither bond or free nor any helper for Israel. And so remember there was that time of vacuum.

And because the Syrians had to turn around and face what was happening with Assyria, Israel was able to expand. And so they got a brief respite in those days, but it doesn't last long. That's 2 Kings 14.

How far ahead do you have to look to see the decline and disappearance of the northern

kingdom? Sennacherib comes in chapter 18. So it's not that long at all. And that's why I say this story persisted largely for Judah's benefit.

So anyway, we're talking about the book of Nahum. Nahum is all about Nineveh. Pretty much all he talks about is Nineveh and the projected destruction of Nineveh.

Now, here's my question. Jonah went to Nineveh. Jonah walked around the city.

Remember it took him three days. And it's a huge city. And as he delivers this message, yet 40 days and Nineveh will be destroyed.

They fall down in sackcloth and ashes and repent. And God says, okay, I won't destroy you. Which came first, his prophecy about Jeroboam II or his prophecy to Nineveh? We don't know.

What we do know is that Jonah lived during that time, which is early. 2 Kings 14 is early compared to the other writing prophets. And then later on we have Nahum.

And Nahum is generally dated at the very close just prior to the destruction of Nineveh in 612 BC. So here is the bookend effect. If you look at chapter 4 of Jonah, Jonah, you remember the whole thing about the plant that rises up and there's a shadow that he enjoys while he's waiting.

God already doesn't destroy Nineveh on the 40th day. And Jonah is very put out. But he goes and sits on a hill outside the city to watch and see if maybe God's just got a broken clock and it'll still get destroyed.

It displeased Jonah exceedingly. Chapter 4, verse 1, he became angry and he prayed to the Lord, ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish. I know that you're a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, one who relents from doing harm.

Slow to anger, Jonah 4, 2. Nahum, chapter 1, the burden against Nineveh, the book of the vision of Nahum, the Elkoshite, more about that momentarily. God is jealous and the Lord avenges. The Lord avenges and is furious.

The Lord will take his vengeance on his adversaries. He reserves wrath for his enemies. The Lord, verse 3, is slow to anger and great in power.

In case you had any doubt that there's a link back to Jonah, Jonah remarks on the Lord's propensity for being slow to anger at the end of his book. Nahum picks up that theme at the beginning of his book. The Lord is slow to anger, great in power and will not at all acquit the wicked.

Now, this is a theme that goes all the way back to Exodus 34, verse 6, to which you might turn. And if you remember at all the geography of Exodus, Exodus 34 is where Moses sees the glory of the Lord. Exodus 34, verse 6. Moses says, Lord, show me your glory.

He says, I'm going to have to tuck you into a rock or you're going to be incinerated by it. And you can't look at it directly, but as I retreat, as I pass by, you'll be able to look afterward. So as God passes in front of Moses, his glory, there is a proclamation.

The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Right. Same idea we have here.

So if you look at this in Hebrew, there are two characteristics of God that are proclaimed here. He is merciful. This is *chanun*, *chana*, and abundant in *chesed*, which is your covenant loyalty or faithfulness and truth, *emet*.

So he is merciful and gracious. He is *rachum* and *chanun*, merciful and gracious. He is abundant in *chesed* and *emet*, grace and truth, grace and truth.

It has kind of a familiar ring to it, grace and truth. A theme of course, picked up in John chapter one with reference to the Lord Jesus. But this is a visible manifestation of the glory of God, which is exactly what the Lord Jesus is.

He is the fullness of deity and bodily forms. So we would expect that when Moses sees a visible manifestation of God's glory, this is the description. This is the proclamation that comes with it.

He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in *chesed* and *emet*, abundant in grace and truth, slow to anger. Nevertheless, he does not acquit the guilty. And if you look at the next verse, Exodus 34.7, he keeps *chesed* for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but he will by no means clear the guilty and will visit the iniquity of the fathers on the children and on the children of the children to the third and the fourth generations.

He will visit the iniquity on the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generations. And what this connotes is the idea here is here is a wicked generation. You have a second generation that grows up and when they are responsible, they emulate that wickedness.

You have a third generation that does so and a fourth. And when you get to the third generation of them that hate me, God says, I will cut them off. This is the three-generation curse.

You have three generations in a row that all grow up to emulate this evil and wickedness. God cuts them off. Here's the point.

The Lord is slow to anger, Exodus 34.6. You find this, by the way, also in Numbers 14 and verse 18, much the same idea. The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in love, forgiving sin and rebellion, yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. He punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.

And what this specifically is talking about is not just punishing children because their parents

were evil. It is the third and fourth generation of children who repeat the sin of the parents. In English, it sounds like, well, you know, great-granddaddy sinned and so granddaddy and daddy and I am all suffering for that one sin.

This is the embracing and the repetition of that sin. And you will remember when we were looking at King Hezekiah and we were looking at Ammon and we were looking at Manasseh and the ongoing repetition of sort of a really sin of the high hand in the garden of Uzzah, this embracing of death and eating weird things right there next to God's holy temple. This got repeated and was manifest in the kings themselves.

And God says, that's it for the sins of Manasseh. I'm going to cut off the Southern kingdom of Judah because the people followed the leadership and the leadership reflects the heart of the people in embracing these things. You also find this and turn with me to Psalm 86.

Psalm 86, this is important to understanding the book of Nahum, even though it's talking about Nineveh and we will soon see why. Psalm 86, bow down your ear O Lord and hear me for I am poor and needy. Preserve my life for I am righteous, I am holy.

You are my God, deliver your servant who trusts in you. Be merciful to me O Lord for I cry to you all day long. Rejoice the soul of your servant for to you O Lord I lift up my soul.

For you Lord are good and ready to forgive and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon you. Now look at verse 14, O God the proud have risen against me and a mob of violent men have sought my life and have not set you before them. But you O Lord are a God full of compassion and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in mercy and truth.

He's harking back isn't he to Exodus 34 verse 6 and to Numbers chapter 14 verse 8. Turn to me and have mercy on me, give your strength to your servant and deliver the son of your maid servant. Show me a sign for good that those who hate me may see it and be ashamed because you Lord have helped me and comforted me. So this is the appeal of the faithful minority persecuted by those who have no regard for God.

Isn't that the case in the days of Josiah? Isn't that the case for us today? So God is slow to anger, He is merciful, He is gracious and compassionate but the Lord will also take vengeance. Once again in our study Nahum chapter 1 verses 2 and 3 he says, 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. He is slow to anger and great in power. He 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. So this the Lord taking vengeance as reflected here in the 2nd and 3rd verse of the 1st chapter of Nahum is also found back in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy chapter 32 verse 35.

Deuteronomy 32 35 says, Is this not laid up in store with me, sealed up among my treasures?

Vengeance is mine and recompense. Their foot shall slip in time. You have the word due time added there in italics.

Vengeance is mine and recompense. This is God talking, you have a capital M there on the pronoun vengeance is mine and recompense. Their foot shall slip in time for the day of their calamity is at hand and the things to come hasten upon them.

God reserves mercy. God is slow to anger but God does not acquit the guilty. As we have seen over and over again in recent weeks there is deliverance and there is judgment.

God is the author of both. He is faithful and righteous in both. So for Nineveh the book of Jonah depicts for us God's compassion, God's relenting, God's not bringing judgment on people because they have repented.

They have recognized His warning and they have heeded it and so God relents. Jonah of course the prophet doesn't like this too much and sits on a hill thinking well maybe God will still do it. Well he is going to have a long time to wait because God is still going to judge Nineveh but it is delayed.

Much as God is going to judge the southern kingdom of Judah, could have happened in the days of Hezekiah but there is repentance, there is the turning of the face to the wall with many tears and like King Hezekiah God relents. God grants the king more time, He grants the kingdom more time. But because of their sins the judgment is only delayed, not taken away.

And so we find the depiction of the judgment on Nineveh in the book of Nahum. Now what did we say when we studied Jonah? The story is really for God's people. It is a cartoon, it is an object lesson using the people of Nineveh with their great wickedness to make a very potent message to God's people.

We are sending a prophet to Nineveh but we are really talking about God's dealing with his own people. This is why the book of Jonah is in the Hebrew Bible not in some Assyrian chronicle somewhere. Behold a raggedy man looking very strange came from the province of Israel to deliver a message to us and now we find this on some inscription of Sennacherib.

No, we find it in the Hebrew Bible because it was actually a message to God's people. Here is the point, so is the book of Nahum. And when you see God talking Nineveh in chapter 1, Nineveh in chapter 2, and Nineveh in chapter 3, Nineveh is actually standing in for Judah in chapter 1, Judah in chapter 2, and Judah in chapter 3. It is shorthand, so keep that in mind.

It was Nineveh standing in for God's people back in the book of Jonah and it is still Nineveh standing in for God's people in the book of Nahum. By the way, Nahum does not go to Assyria and deliver this prophecy to the Ninevites. He is in and remains in Judah.

El Kosh is a town in Judah. It is also a town in several other places. There was one up in Galilee, or they think there was one.

But here is an interesting little tidbit. Where did Peter live? Where was his house found up there by the Sea of Galilee? What is the name of the town Jesus went there? Capernaum, town of Nahum. Capernaum means town of Nahum.

It is likely that he was from there and much as the Lord and the disciples, several of them, went down from Galilee and spent his time in Judah. But Capernaum means the town of Nahum. But he is from El Kosh.

And whether El Kosh was up there in Galilee, it is a fairly common designation. There was even an El Kosh outside Nineveh in Assyria where you now have a town just across the river. I have forgotten the name, but it will come to me.

It is well known even today. So the burden against Nineveh, the book of the vision of Nahum, the El Koshite, is really God's burden delivered to Judah. But they are not going to see it right away because they are all happy about the demise of Nineveh.

They remember what happened to their brethren up in the north. So God is jealous and the Lord avenges. The Lord avenges and is furious.

The Lord will take his vengeance on his adversaries and reserves wrath for his enemies. It is a burden against Nineveh. So they will read this all day long because they don't really yet realize, although there is a strong clue, that when God pronounces judgment on the Ninevites and talks about his enemies, he is actually talking about those who are his enemies right there in the capital city of Judah, which is Jerusalem.

Nineveh is actually Jerusalem and the Ninevites are the Jerusalemites who are hanging out in the garden of Uzzah and practicing the same kind of idolatrous and godless worship that they did. The Lord is slow to anger, great in power, will not at all acquit. The Lord has his way in the whirlwind and in the storm and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

He rebukes the sea and makes it dry and dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither. Now if we're talking to Nineveh, why is he talking about mountains that are in Israel? Remember the bulls of Bashan? Wasn't there an Israelite prophet somewhere in the vicinity of Mount Carmel? I'm reminded, I think, of Elijah and the prophets of Baal.

Here's a clue that we're not really talking about Nineveh. Most Ninevites don't know the geography of Israel, but everybody in Judah knows it. Bashan and Carmel wither and the flower of Lebanon wilts.

Is Lebanon closer to Judah or closer to Nineveh? It's closer to Judah. It's just the other side of Israel, right up the coast, right straight up through the northern kingdom. The next thing you hit is Lebanon.

The mountains quake before him, the hills melt, and the earth heaves at his presence or burns at his presence, depending on how you take that verb. Yes, the world and all who dwell in it,

who can stand before his indignation and who can endure the fierceness of his anger? Now with whom is God angry? Pagans or his own people who break faith with the covenant? What does it say in Hebrews? With whom was he angry for 40 years? With whom was he having a case and they all dropped in the wilderness? It wasn't the Amalekites, and it wasn't the Egyptians. It doesn't say God was angry with them.

Who does God get angry with? Those that have pledged loyalty, have entered into covenant, and then have forsaken it. His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. The Lord is good.

He is a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knows those who trust in him. Are we still talking about Nineveh? He knows those in Nineveh who trust him? Who's he talking about? Those in Jerusalem, that tiny minority, the marking inkhorn angel has gone through and seen those who sigh and cry over Jerusalem. But with an overflowing flood he will make an utter end of its place, and darkness will pursue his enemies.

You remember even in Daniel, much later time, when he's talking in Daniel 9 about the 70 weeks, and he talks about breaking the covenant with the many for one week, and talking about the time of Antichrist and so on. He says the end will come with what? The end will come with a flood. Very sort of a cryptic notion in Daniel 9. Not so cryptic when you look back at Jonah and Nahum.

You can't think about Jonah without thinking about lots and lots of water. Being buried beneath lots and lots of water. Preserved, but under the water.

Seaweeds wrapping around his head. He's inside the fish. With an overflowing flood he will make an utter end of its place, and darkness will pursue his enemies.

Jonah starts out in darkness and under the water. He ends up on a hill in dryness with the sun beating on his head, because his little plant withers. God prepared a worm, remember? What do you conspire against the Lord? He will make an utter end of it.

Affliction will not rise up a second time. For while tangled thorns and drunken drunkards will be devoured like stubble fully dried, from you comes forth one who plots evil against the Lord, a wicked counselor. This is Jerusalem.

This is the leadership. This is in high places. This is right outside the wall of the temple.

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. For now I will break off his yoke from you and burst your bonds apart.

These yokes and bonds are talking about what the government of Judah has placed on his people. God says, I'm going to break those bonds and yokes. You know why? You're not going to be here anymore.

You're going to go into greater bondage and under a greater yoke. You're going to go forth into Babylon. 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 known image of your father, let it be known that you are vile. Does graves and vileness ring any bells at all? Remember the description of what was going on in the Garden of Uzzah, eating vile things, eating the mouse and the swine, staying all night among the graves.

God says, I'm ending all of that. You're not going to perpetuate these abominations right there in my holy precincts. Look at chapter 2, "...he who scatters has come up before your face.

Man the fort, watch the road, strengthen your flanks, fortify your power mightily." Remember this is what Josiah is going to do, he is going to try to fortify and try to get ready, but it's all in vain. "...the Lord will restore the excellence of Jacob like the excellence of Israel for the empty years have emptied them out and ruined their vine branches." How many times does God compare His people to a vineyard? And He goes, He says, I've hedged about my vineyard, what can I say about my vineyard? "...the shields of His mighty men made red, the valiant men are in scarlet, the chariots come with flaming torches in the day of His preparation, and the spears are brandished, the chariots rage in the streets, they jostle one another in the broad roads, they seem like torches, they run like lightning. He remembers His nobles, they stumble in their walk, they make haste to her walls, and the defense is prepared, the gates of the rivers are opened and the palace is dissolved.

It is decreed, she shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maid servants shall lead, as with the voice of doves, beating their breasts. Though Nineveh of old was like a pool of water, now they flee away." Remember Hezekiah's tunnel, the pool of Siloam, the spring Gihon, bringing water inside the city, and in the days of Hezekiah, there was deliverance when Assyria came up against it. That's not going to work when Nebuchadnezzar comes.

"...take spoil of silver, take spoil of gold, there is no end of treasure or wealth of every desirable prize, she is empty, desolate, and waste, the heart melts and the knees shake, much pain is in every side, and all their faces are drained of color. Where is the dwelling of the lions?" There was a lion on each armrest of the throne of Solomon, by the way, also of the throne of Sennacherib. This was a common motif for royal thrones, to put lions under, just like people put lions outside libraries, you know, on each side of the door, each side of the gate.

"...where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions?" What's the king of Judah known as? What's their motif? The lion of the tribe of Judah? "...where the lion walked, the lioness and the lion's cub, and no one made them afraid. The lion tore in pieces enough for his cubs, killed for his lionesses, filled his cave with prey, and his dens with flesh. Behold, I am against you, says the Lord of hosts, I will burn your chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions.

I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall be heard no more." Woe to the bloody city! Notice how it's not named here, because Nineveh and Jerusalem have merged. "...woe to the bloody city, it is full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs.

The noise of a whip, and the noise of rattling wheels, of galloping horses, clattering chariots, horsemen charged with bright sword and glittering spear. There is a multitude slain, a great number of bodies, countless corpses. They stumble over the corpses because of the multitude of harlotries, of the seductive harlot, the mistress of sorceries, who sells nations through her harlotries, and families through her sorceries.

Behold, I am against you, says the Lord of hosts. I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show your nakedness to the nations, and the kingdoms will see your shame.

I will cast abominable filth upon you, make you vile, and make you a spectacle. I don't have time to show you all of the parallel passages, such as Isaiah chapter 14, verse 16, where this is all applied, or the prophet Hosea, who married Gomer, and Judas compared to a harlot. I will cast abominable filth upon you, make you vile, and make you a spectacle.

It shall come to pass that all who look on you will flee from you, and say, Nineveh is laid waste. Who will bemoan her? Where shall I seek comforters for you? This is sort of like calling Rome Babylon in the New Testament. Are you better than no Ammon that was situated by the river? This is a reference to Egypt and to the wreck of Egyptian hegemony down there by the Nile, and the canals of the Nile, that had waters around her, whose rampart was the sea, whose wall was the sea.

Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was boundless. Put and Lubim were your helpers. Yet she was carried away, went into captivity.

Her young children also were dashed to pieces at the head of every street. And you remember there's a psalm that talks about the dashing of children against the rocks and so on. This is Jerusalem.

This is hanging their harps on the trees and sighing and crying over the sack and wreckage of Jerusalem. The cast lots for honorable men and all her great men are bound in chains. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, the flower of the children of nobility going into captivity.

This is Jerusalem. It is Jerusalem. And yet even in the midst of this you see that God remembers those who are His.

God will preserve the righteous. There is a way of deliverance for them. You also will seek refuge from the enemy.

All your strongholds are fig trees with ripened figs. If they are shaken they will fall into the mouth of the eater. What does the fig tree uniformly represent in scripture? It's the people of God.

It's the nation of Israel or what's left of it here in the days of Judah. Surely your people in your midst are women. The gates of your land are wide open for your enemies.

Fire shall devour the bars of your gates. Draw your water for the siege. Fortify your strongholds.

Go into the clay and tread the mortar. Make strong the brick kiln. The fire will devour you.

The sword will cut you off. It will eat you up like a locust. Make yourself many like the locust.

Make yourself many like the swarming locusts. You have multiplied your merchants more than the stars of heaven. The locust plunders and flies away." This is valuing commerce and monetary gain over the God of the covenant, worshiping God, remembering God, prioritizing God.

This is materialism instead of spiritual life. "Your commanders are like locusts and your generals like great grasshoppers which camp in the hedges on a cold day. When the sun rises they flee away and the place where they are is not known.

Woe to him who makes flesh his strength, who thinks that the horse and the chariot and the army is going to save in the day of God's judgment. It won't. Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria." Guess what? Your shepherds slumber, O king of Judah.

"Your nobles rest in the dust. Your people are scattered on mountains and no one gathers them. Your injury has no healing.

Your wound is severe. All who hear news of you will clap hands over you for upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually." The nations are going to rejoice, especially those surrounding nations. Remember the woes of all the surrounding nations? God said, you rejoice and you come in and plunder and you think it's great that God's people are disciplined.

Your time is coming. Well, this is the time of the judgment of God's people. So what do we get from the book of Nahum here? Two things.

One is that God's people are the same two things we saw in Zephaniah, the same two things we saw in Habakkuk, the same two things for that matter that you found all the way back at the beginning in the book of Jonah. But this is bookends. In Jonah's day, Nineveh repented.

Now, did it last? Was there a wonderful revival? Did they destroy their idolatrous practices and start worshiping the God of Israel up there in Assyria? Of course not. It was momentary, it was shallow, but God honored it nevertheless, just as he honored the repentance of Ahab. But did that last? The house of Omri is still destroyed.

Ahab and Jezebel are still destroyed. But that momentary repentance, God honored it as a sign and as a reminder that God will honor any kind of turning. But the better and deeper the turning, the more fully God will honor it.

God is looking for those who are looking for him. But this is bookends. In Jonah, Nineveh was spared.

In Nahum, Nineveh is utterly and completely destroyed and nothing can save them. And the picture is in the days of Hezekiah, Judah was spared. But in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, Judah will be destroyed.

So, how can we ensure as we look at this? It was a message to Judah. It is a message to us. God's judgment is coming.

He is slow to anger. He is characterized by Chesed and by Emmet, by grace and by truth. But he will not acquit the guilty.

He reserves mercy for thousands of those who love him. But he will visit the judgment on sin to the third and fourth generation of those who despise him, who hate him, who reject him. The third generation is 120 years.

You have that going all the way back to the days of Noah. 120 years shows up in Genesis 6. Three 40-year generations add up to 120 years. How long after Hezekiah do we find ourselves? About three generations.

And in the third and the fourth generation, after that shallow but recognized turning, God is going to see in the days of Manasseh, the third generation, that those predilections and those choices have not changed. Each successive generation has made the same bad choice in Judah. And by the time that fourth generation comes along, Nebuchadnezzar comes along.

So, it is significant that God tries every different means, whether it is direct prophetic address, whether it is indirect, such as talking about Nineveh, but really talking about Jerusalem in the same way that He talks about the King of Tyre when He is really talking about Satan, Lucifer. This shorthand and this allusion is significant. What is particularly interesting to me as we close here is, if you check back at the end of the book of Jonah, the very last verse, God says, Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than 120,000 persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and much livestock? Now, without getting into eleph, and we've talked about the difficulties with the meaning of that term before, but He says there's 120 elephs, 120,000.

In some old King James versions it says six score, but there's not a six there. This is 120. Who don't know their right hand from their left? If you look back in Deuteronomy chapter 1 and verse 29, you have the idea that the little children do not know their right hand from their left.

They don't know what is right and what is wrong. Deuteronomy 1:29. I think I may have said 29. I meant 39.

The little ones, you said, would be taken captive, your children who do not yet know good from bad. They will enter the land. The general calculation for little ones is a fifth of the population,

and they've often estimated that the population of Nineveh, based on this idea that those who don't know their right hand from their left in Nineveh would be a fifth, that the total population, if you multiply 120 by 5, you get what? 600, right? How many people left Egypt with Moses fighting men? 600,000.

So you get the idea that God says when there is repentance, even the shallow repentance that Israel had when they put the blood on the doorposts and came out, you remember how shallow that was because they couldn't maintain their faith for even a few days. By the time they get in the wilderness, they're complaining that they missed the leeks and garlics and they want to go back. And at Sinai, they flee from the mountain and they end up worshipping the golden calf.

But there is a five-fold connection between the 120,000 that you have at the end of Jonah, harking back to the 600,000 men who march out of Israel. And you sort of get the idea that the book of Jonah says, should I not have mercy when people have even this slight and shallow kind of repentance as I did on you, those who don't know their right hand from their left? And God says, I will take those little ones who are too young to know, and they are the ones who are going to go in and inherit the land. And so this idea that there are these little ones who don't really know right from wrong and they are going to be delivered, should I not deliver them since they're not responsible? Let me give them a chance to choose.

And then when you come to Nahum, he says, okay, you've had the chance to choose. And for three and four generations, you have chosen against me. So now the nation itself is going to go out.

It is going to be destroyed just like Egypt. And he mentioned specifically a town in Egypt in Nahum. And he says, they were sacked and destroyed.

Why shouldn't you be given the same fate? They relied on numbers. It didn't do them any good. So there is this symmetry.

And the application for us is once again, reemphasized over and over again, the day of judgment is coming. God will not acquit the guilty. He's not going to give people a pass.

It all depends on attitude. Are you in line for deliverance? And if you are, then you're in good shape. When you look at the book of Nahum again, right in the middle, God will provide a way of escape.

In verse seven of chapter one, the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble. He knows those who trust in him, but with an overflowing flood, he will make an utter end of its place and darkness will pursue his enemies. You can't find a single uniform pronouncement of judgment anywhere in scripture.

They always include God's remembrance of those who trust in him. He will not suffer the righteous to be moved. So even as we look at a day of darkness, a generation that is lovers of

selves and lovers of pleasure, incontinent, unthankful, unholy, disobedient, and all the rest of those things that Paul talks about in the latter days, just remember, we are not of those who fall back unto perdition, but of those who, by faith and patience, inherit the promises.

It may look dark, but if we're shining as lights in the midst of it, God has reserved for us wonderful blessing, wonderful attention and preservation. So it can be discouraging to look around, especially when you look around at the allegedly Christian world, but don't be discouraged about our own place in God's heart and in God's thoughts. He reserves his grace and his truth, his mercy and his compassion for us.

And it's hopeful even in the midst of a generation that is hopelessly in line for judgment. And it also tells us that there is a time when it is no longer going to be fruitful to try to call that generation back to repentance and back to faith. It's the days of Manasseh.

God says, you're going out and nothing's going to change it. Individuals can escape that judgment, but the nation as a whole, the generation as a whole, will not. So we distinguish between our individual selves and the fate of our nation, the fate of our generation, the fate of those who richly deserve and require the judgment of God.

So, wonderful balance there. The book of Jonah, the book of Nahum. God says, anybody that repents, I'll relent.

But it's got to be genuine repentance and it's got to last. You've got to be those who trust over the long haul. You've got to be those who trust over the long haul.

And by faith and patience, inherit the promises. We hope that's us. Grace and truth.

Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the encouragement that we find even in the midst of these dark pronouncements of judgment. We know that your judgment is necessary, even as ultimately at the end of the age, you will purge and judge this entire world so that it can be cleansed and fitted to be the inheritance of those who by faith and patience inherit those Old Testament promises you gave to your people Israel.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will both motivate, challenge us through these things and encourage us to remain faithful and to persevere in our faith through the challenging times that clearly lie ahead. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.