

The Book of Nahum
Nahum Chapter 1

Key Terms:

Learn by Heart (SC and/or Scripture Passage):

Main Objectives for this Lesson:

Key Questions & Answers:

Catechesis Summary:

Small Catechism Connection:

Lesson

Devotion

- Congregation at Prayer

Review

- The Book of Nahum was pinned by the Prophet Nahum roughly 140 years after the book of Jonah.
- Historical Context – Assyrian Empire is strong and threatening to overtake Judah.
- The Ninevites have reverted back to their old ways.
- God’s revelation about His Name as seen in Exodus 34:6-7; ““The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”
- Prophets, such as Nahum, proclaim the second part, “The LORD will by no means clear the guilty...”
- This was apparent through chapter 1, verse 3.

Na. 1:1

- What is an oracle?
 - An oracle is a divinely inspired utterance by a prophet sent by God. This term often denotes a prophecy against a specific foreign nation (e.g., Isa. 13:1, 19:1, Hab. 1:1; Zech. 9:1).
 - The Hebrew word for this, *massa*, also means burden.
 - God laid a heavy burden on Nahum’s shoulders by calling him to speak a word of judgment against Nineveh.
 - Ever since the fall, God has sent men to proclaim the truth of His Word. On account of sin, this message may not always be one of joy. God’s messengers are often treated with contempt, even killed, but they must speak God’s Word of truth.
- What is Nineveh?
 - It is said to be the most populous city in the Assyrian Empire. (Its ruins now lie in modern day Iraq).
 - The city is also referenced by the Prophets Jonah and Zephaniah.
 - Holy Scripture emphasize Nineveh’s role as the symbol of the Assyrian Empire, the enemy of Israel.

- Nineveh was renowned for brutal conquest – cutting the heads off of enemy soldiers, burning young men and women.
- It was a city of cruelty, prostitution, materialism, arrogance, and ultimately opposed to God.
- Needless to say, Ninevah was wicked, full of evil.
- What is a vision?
 - Indicates a visual revelations. One that is seen as opposed to being told.
 - This visual revelation is divine – coming from God to be used for His purpose.
 - Nahum through inspiration pins His vision down.
- What do we know of Nahum?
 - Little is known about the prophet.
 - His name means “comforter.” This suggests that his prophecy, a word of judgment against Nineveh, brought comfort to the people of Judah.

Na. 1:2

- What does it mean that the LORD is jealous? What commandment comes to mind?
 - This isn’t a modern day boyfriend/girlfriend problem.
 - Jealousy is essential to God’s character, part of His essence.
 - The Triune God can’t tolerate any rival to the perfect love and fear and trust He demands from all mankind.
 - This is what we say with the first commandment. “You shall have no other gods.”
- What does it mean that the LORD is an avenging God?
 - “Avenging” is used three times within this verse.
 - Nahum is emphasizing the second part of God’s revealed will;
 - “...but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation” (Exodus 34:7).
 - During the time of Jonah:
 - “Nineveh repented, punishment was deferred. But such are the hearts of men that when the punishment ceased, so did the repentance. They slipped back into the same wickedness under which they had labored before” (Luther, Lectures on Nahum).
 - However:
 - “Because of their affluent wealth and great successes, they returned to their old way of thinking, even though Jonah had taught them otherwise...
 - They were even beginning to threaten the destruction of Judah, just as they earlier had led all Israel into wretched captivity...
 - They believed that they would accomplish this easily...
 - After all, the people of Judah were few and weak – the smallest part of the kingdom...
 - Thus the Assyrians had absolutely no doubt that they would easily swallow up that number” (Luther, Lectures on Nahum).
 - What Nahum is getting at:
 - Don’t think that once you repent, and you’re good and can go on sinning that grace may abound.

- God will by no means clear the guilty.

Na. 1:3

- What does it mean that the LORD is slow to anger? What comes to mind?
 - Here, we see that the LORD is slow to anger.
 - God doesn't punish immediately. He is compassionate for Christ's sake.
 - He isn't a cruel tyrant lashing out on a whim.
 - He doesn't desire the death of the sinner.
 - That means, God's anger is well-considered.
- Why does Nahum add God is great in power?
 - God maybe slow to anger, but when His fury is poured out it is justified.
 - It is the fury and wrath of Him who is all powerful.
- Nahum says, "The LORD will by no means clear the guilty. How is God being revealed here?
 - A Judge!
 - When a judge declares an accused person innocent, he declares him free from the wrong or guilt with which the accused was charged, and free from the penalty demanded by the law.
 - Here, God isn't saying not guilty/innocent, but guilty.
 - God will carry out His justice. He will carry out His vengeance. He has the final say. There will be punishment
 - You can't say you haven't been warned.
 - Prophets and Apostles preached this.
 - Pastors continue to preach this today.
 - Through the Word of God, you have God's revealed will.
 - Because God's vengeance is justified, "He will no means clear the guilt."

Verse 1-3 Thoughts

- We confess at the beginning of every service that we are by nature sinful and unclean and deserving of temporal and eternal punishment.
- On the cross Christ suffered God's wrath and punishment for sin. Christ is the propitiation for our sin. His blood atones for our sins.
- Apart from the blood of Christ, there's only the verdict of guilty.
- To live in unrepentant sin is to say you don't need Christ.
- How can Nahum's words, be words of comfort for Christ's church as His name indicates?

Na. 1:3b

- What are God's ways? What does this reveal about God?
 - God is in whirlwind and storm
 - This is an incredible depiction of divine vengeance against God's enemies.
 - No force, no wisdom, no human ingenuity will be able to resist the vengeance of the Lord.
 - Clouds in the sky are like the fine dust that is kicked up when you walk on the street.

Na. 1:4

- When you hear, “He rebukes the sea and makes it dry...,” does anything particular Scripture passages come to mind?
 - Examples:
 - The Israelites crossing the Red Sea at the time of the exodus (Exodus 14)
 - The Israelites crossing the Jordan River to go into the promise land (Joshua 3)
 - Elisha crossing over the Jordan River (2 Kings 2).
- How about, “He dries up all the rivers...”?
 - 1 Kings 17:1, Elijah reveals God caused the rains to cease and the rivers to dry up.
- What do you know about Bashan, Carmel and Lebanon? Have you heard of these locations in Scripture?
 - These were three locals in Israel’s northern territory.
 - Bashan and Carmel had very fertile, very productive soil.
 - Lebanon was full of trees.
- What is Nahum getting at when he says these fruitful places wither?
 - The God who creates and gives life, is also the one who makes all these things perish.
 - He reduces to nothing all powers, all wealth, all abundance, all the most powerful and strongest things.

Na. 1:5

- “The mountains quake before him...hills melt...earth heaves...”
 - Can you picture this?
 - The violent convulsions and upheavals of nature picture how the physical world bows before God, the God who approaches in wrath and judgment against sin.

Na. 1:6

- Who can stand before his indignation?
 - No one!
 - These are rhetorical questions.
 - “He will by no means clear the guilty...”
 - God’s full wrath is poured out on Nineveh – who is seen as the fullest embodiment of sin.

Na. 1:7

- Verses 7 and 8 captures for us the central theme for the Book of Nahum.
- How is God described now?
 - Good! A stronghold!
 - This is a striking contrast to the portrayal of God’s anger.
 - For the wicked foes, God is a strong and terrible Avenger, but He good, a stronghold, for those who:
 - trust in Him
 - trust not in their own power or wisdom.
 - What is judgment for Nineveh, is great comfort and consolation for Judah.

- Within harsh judgment against sin, is sweet grace for faith.
- How are these words of comfort for you?
 - God doesn't step back from anyone who inflicts harm upon His people.
 - He fights for us.

Na. 1:8-9

- God, who is good, is also just.
- He remains a God of vengeance against all His enemies.
- He makes a complete end
 - This phrase is mentioned twice in these two verses.
- How do we see a picture of the Second Coming of Christ?
 - The victory Christ won on the cross over sin, death, and the devil will be fully realized when he comes again.
 - AC XVII states, "Our churches teach that at the end of the world Christ will appear for judgment and will raise all the dead (1 Thess. 4:13-5:2). He will give the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys, but He will condemn ungodly people and the devils to be tormented without end (Matt. 25:31-46).

Na. 1:10

- What is this imagery trying to convey about the Ninevites?
 - They are united. They feel close and secure and strong.
- Yet, what will happen to them?
 - Like dry stubble, they will easily destroyed.
- Name some Biblical accounts where God easily destroys powerful militaries:

Na. 1:11

- Probably a reference to the Assyrian king Sennacherib, who had invaded Judah during Hezekiah's reign (Is. 36:1).
- This worthless counselor plotted against the Lord, setting himself and others up for destruction.

Na. 1:12-13

- Who is Yahweh addressing?
 - Judah!
 - Before God, through the Prophet Nahum, was addressing Assyria.
 - Now, He turns His words to afflicted Judah to comfort and uplift.
- Where do we see words of comfort?
 - While they are strong they will be cut down, pass away.
 - Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more.
 - Up to this point God has allowed Assyria to affliction Judah, but that oppression is coming to an end.
 - "I will break his yoke from off you and will burst your bonds apart"
 - Same words as Psalm 2:3
 - Yoke: A wooden crosspiece that fastened two animals together, figurative for oppression.
 - This yoke, this oppression is being removed.

- How do we see Christ?
 - Through the cross we have the promise of deliverance from all our enemies!

Na. 1:14

- Who is Yahweh addressing?
 - Assyria.
 - Specifically Sennacherib, the king of the Assyrians.
 - Notice the “you”
- Where do we see words of judgment?
 - “No more shall your name be perpetuated...”
 - The Lord is threatening that Sennacherib would have absolutely no further descendants.
 - Their temples will be robbed of their carved and molten images.
 - Yahweh Himself, the fountain of life, will dig the king’s grave.
 - He is “vile” - of little account, despicable, weighed and found wanting.

Final Thoughts

- Continue to keep in mind God’s revelation about His Name as seen in Exodus 34:6-7;
 - ““The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”
- Throughout these verses Nahum foretells God’s swift and final destruction of Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire.
- God will execute His avenging wrath against His adversaries, those who plot evil against Him and His people.
- They have this promise for Christ’s sake.
- As God mercifully delivered ancient Judah from Assyrian oppression, so He promises to rescue us from all persecution of His church today all on account of Jesus Christ and His death on the cross.
- We receive all good things through the blood of Christ.

Closing Devotion