

Nahum 1:1–15 – God’s Justice, God’s Goodness, and Our Response

1. Introduction and Background (Nahum 1:1)

“The burden against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.” (Nahum 1:1, NKJV)

The book of Nahum is short—three small chapters—but its message is weighty. Nahum calls his prophecy a “burden”: a heavy message from God about judgment coming against Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire.

For many years, some critics claimed that Assyria and certain Assyrian kings mentioned in the Bible were legendary. They said the biblical writers invented names like Sargon and exaggerated the greatness of Nineveh. Then archaeologists began to uncover ruins in the region of modern-day Iraq. They found the remains of Nineveh and palaces belonging to kings the Bible names. Far from being fictional, Nineveh turned out to be exactly what Scripture said it was: a huge and powerful city, one of the great centers of the ancient world.

Once again, the Word of God stood firm, while human “certainty” had to back down.

Nahum himself is not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. His name means “comfort” or “consolation,” and he is called “the Elkoshite,” probably from a town named Elkosh. Many scholars think this town was in the region of Galilee. It is possible that the later town “Capernaum” (literally “village of Nahum”) on the Sea of Galilee was named in connection with this prophet.

As we read Nahum, it becomes clear he ministered around the same time as Micah and Isaiah, during the reign of Hezekiah. In chapter 2, Nahum seems to refer to the blasphemies of the Rabshakeh, the Assyrian official who mocked the God of Israel outside the walls of Jerusalem (see Second Kings chapters 18–19). That places Nahum’s ministry roughly in the late eighth century B.C., some time after the Northern Kingdom of Israel had already fallen to Assyria.

2. From Jonah to Nahum – Nineveh’s Second Chance Is Over

More than a century before Nahum, God sent Jonah to Nineveh with a warning. Jonah reluctantly preached, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (Jonah 3:4, NKJV). To Jonah’s surprise and displeasure, the people of Nineveh—from the king to the commoner—repented. They humbled themselves, turned from their violence, and cried out for mercy. God relented from the disaster He had threatened and spared the city.

Nineveh’s repentance, however, did not continue from generation to generation. Over time the city returned to its old ways—violence, cruelty, idolatry, and arrogance. By Nahum’s day, Nineveh was again infamous as a “bloody city” (Nahum 3:1). Assyria had ravaged nations, including Israel, and had threatened Judah itself.

God had been patient. He had given Nineveh time—decades of time—to live out the repentance it once showed. Now the time of warning was over, and the time of judgment had come. That is the “burden” Nahum must announce: Nineveh will fall, and this time it will not rise again.

For Judah, this is both a warning and a comfort: a warning that God does deal with sin, and a comfort that God sees their oppressors and will not let injustice rule forever.

3. “God Is Jealous” – What That Really Means (Nahum 1:2–3)

*“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;
The Lord is slow to anger and great in power,
And will not at all acquit the wicked.”* (Nahum 1:2–3, NKJV)

Nahum begins with strong language that makes some people uncomfortable. We like to speak of God’s love, but here we read words like “jealous,” “avenges,” “furious,” “wrath.”

We need to remember that the Bible uses human words to talk about an infinite God. Our language is limited, but it can still point us in the right direction.

When Scripture says, “God is jealous,” it does not mean God is petty or insecure. Human jealousy is usually rooted in selfishness and fear. God’s “jealousy” is very different. It means that He loves us so deeply that He will not share our ultimate loyalty with idols, false gods, or competing “master passions.”

Every person has a “god,” even the one who claims to be an atheist. Whatever is the controlling passion of your life—your highest love, your deepest trust, your ultimate priority—that is your god. The true and living God is not content to be one priority among many. He knows that if anything other than Himself becomes your supreme love, you will miss what is truly best for you.

So when Scripture calls God “jealous,” it is expressing His passionate, protective love for you. He knows that you cannot enter into His best for your life while you are chasing after other gods, other loves, or other ultimate loyalties.

Nahum also says, “The Lord avenges.” There is a day of judgment. Sin is not something we can commit with impunity. God does not always judge quickly. He is “slow to anger” and “longsuffering,” but patience is not weakness, and delay is not approval. Those who persist in evil and refuse to repent will face His justice in His time.

Practical Application

- What is truly the master passion of your life?
- Is there anything—pleasure, success, relationships, comfort, security, reputation—that has quietly become more important to you than God Himself?

God’s jealousy is not about Him “losing territory.” It is about His love for you and His desire that you live in what is truly best. When He confronts our idols, He is not harming us; He is rescuing us.

4. God's Majestic Power and Holy Anger (Nahum 1:3–6)

*"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.*

...

*The mountains quake before Him,
The hills melt,
And the earth heaves at His presence,
Yes, the world and all who dwell in it.
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."* (from Nahum 1:3–6, NKJV)

Nahum uses vivid, poetic language to describe the greatness and holiness of God. Storms, clouds, seas, mountains, hills, earthquakes—all of creation responds to His presence. The point is clear: no one and nothing can successfully resist Him.

The question in verse 6 is sobering: "Who can stand before His indignation?" The honest answer is: no one in their own righteousness. Left to ourselves, we are all guilty before a holy God.

Yet right in the middle of this description of wrath and power, Nahum suddenly says something that shines like a diamond in a dark sky.

5. "The Lord Is Good" – Holding on to a Foundational Truth (Nahum 1:7)

*"The Lord is good,
A stronghold in the day of trouble;
And He knows those who trust in Him."* (Nahum 1:7, NKJV)

This is one of the most important declarations in Scripture: "The Lord is good." If you know nothing else, you need to know this.

We do not always see God's goodness in our circumstances. We wrestle with questions:

"If God is good, why did this happen?"

"If God is good, why does He allow suffering, injustice, violence, or tragedy—especially involving the innocent?"

Those questions are real, and Scripture does not treat them lightly. Psalm 73 describes a believer who almost lost his footing spiritually when he saw the prosperity of the wicked and the struggles of the righteous. It confused him deeply—until he "went into the sanctuary of God" and began to see the bigger picture (Psalm 73:17, NKJV).

Our problem is that we are spiritually nearsighted. We see what is immediately in front of us—today's pain, this week's loss, this season's confusion. God sees the entire road, including eternity. When you only look at the present moment, God's goodness seems questionable. When you step

into His presence and let Him stretch your vision out toward eternity, things begin to come into balance.

Many of us can look back on seasons that felt like disasters at the time—places of hardship, disappointment, and even mistreatment. In the moment we cried, “God, if You are good, why am I here? Why is this happening?” But years later we can see how God used those very experiences to shape our character, deepen our dependence on Him, and prepare us for future ministry. What looked like abandonment was actually careful training by a wise and loving Father.

Romans 8:28 (NKJV) does not say that everything that happens to us is good. It says, “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*” God weaves even painful threads into a pattern of ultimate good for those who belong to Him.

Nahum adds, “A stronghold in the day of trouble.” Being a Christian does not exempt you from trouble. Job 5:7 says, “*Yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.*” Psalm 34:19 (NKJV) says, “*Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.*” Jesus Himself told His disciples, “*In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*” (John 16:33, NKJV)

The difference is not that believers never suffer; the difference is that believers have a refuge. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Proverbs 18:10, NKJV).

Finally, Nahum says, “He knows those who trust in Him.” The Lord is not distant or indifferent. He knows you, sees you, and understands everything about your situation. His eye is on you in your trouble, and His heart is committed to you.

Practical Application

- When your circumstances tempt you to question God’s goodness, choose to cling to what He has declared: “The Lord is good.”
- When trouble comes—and it will—run to Him as your stronghold instead of collapsing into fear or bitterness.
- Remind yourself: “God knows me. He knows my situation. He is not surprised, and He is not absent.”

6. God’s Certain Judgment on Nineveh (Nahum 1:8–14)

*“But with an overflowing flood
He will make an utter end of its place,
And darkness will pursue His enemies.”* (Nahum 1:8, NKJV)

From verse 8 onward, Nahum turns again to announce what God will do to Nineveh. He speaks of an “overflowing flood,” complete destruction, and a final end that will not be repeated: “Affliction will not rise up a second time” (Nahum 1:9, NKJV).

History records that Nineveh was destroyed by a coalition of Medes and Babylonians. The Assyrian army initially defeated them in several battles. After these victories, the Assyrians celebrated with drunken feasting. While they were in this vulnerable state, the enemy forces regrouped, attacked again, and overwhelmed them. Ancient sources also suggest that the Tigris River flooded and contributed to the breaching of Nineveh's defenses.

Nahum's words, *"While they are drunk like drunkards, they shall be devoured like stubble fully dried"* (Nahum 1:10, NKJV), were fulfilled with striking accuracy. The city that seemed invincible fell suddenly and completely.

Nahum also hints at the blasphemies of the Assyrian official who mocked the God of Israel at Jerusalem's wall (see Nahum 1:11 and compare with Second Kings chapters 18–19). God did not forget those words. He broke the Assyrian yoke off Judah and declared He would cut off their idols and bury their pride (Nahum 1:13–14).

The Assyrian threat would not return. Nineveh was wiped from the map so thoroughly that for centuries many thought it had never existed at all.

Practical Application

- Nations and systems that seem unshakable can fall in a moment when God brings them into judgment.
- Personal "empires" built on pride, cruelty, or rebellion against God are just as fragile.
- God's patience is real, but it is not endless. When a person or society stubbornly refuses to repent, there comes a point when judgment is no longer delayed.
- This is not just a history lesson about Nineveh. It is a sober warning to our generation.

7. Good News on the Mountains – A Glimpse of Hope (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."* (Nahum 1:15, NKJV)

For Judah, the fall of Nineveh would be good news. Messengers would run over the mountains announcing that the brutal power that had terrorized nations was gone. The people of God were told to keep their feasts and fulfill their vows. They could worship without fear of Assyrian invasion. The "wicked one" who had trampled them would not pass through again.

Nahum's words echo and anticipate a bigger message of good news. Isaiah uses similar language when he looks ahead to the time when God's ultimate salvation will be announced:

*"How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who proclaims peace,
Who brings glad tidings of good things,
Who proclaims salvation,
Who says to Zion,
'Your God reigns!'"* (Isaiah 52:7, NKJV)

The apostle Paul later quotes this verse in Romans chapter 10 when he speaks of the need for people to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:14–15, NKJV). The “good news” now is not merely the fall of a cruel empire, but the coming of a Savior who conquers sin and death.

A Challenge for Believers

Nahum 1 confronts us with a God who is both holy and good, both just and merciful. For those who already belong to Jesus Christ, this chapter carries several clear challenges.

1. Live with a healthy fear of God.
God is not a tame, indulgent grandfather figure. He is the Creator before whom mountains quake and nations fall. He takes sin seriously. Let that reality motivate you to desire a purified heart and choices.
2. Guard your heart from idols and rival passions.
God’s “jealousy” is His passionate love for you. Ask Him to show you anything that has quietly taken first place in your life—career, comfort, approval, pleasure, relationships—and then surrender that place back to Him.
3. Trust His goodness in your trouble.
When life hurts and you do not understand, hold on to Nahum 1:7: “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.” Refuse to let temporary pain redefine God’s character in your eyes.
4. Remember that God will deal with injustice.
You do not have to fix everything or avenge every wrong. God sees. God remembers. God will judge rightly in His time. That frees you from bitterness and revenge and calls you to faithful obedience.
5. Be a bearer of good news.
Nahum celebrated the feet of those who brought the news of Nineveh’s fall. Today, God calls you to carry an even better message: that in Jesus Christ, sin can be forgiven, judgment can be escaped, and peace with God is possible.

An Invitation to Those Who Do Not Yet Know Christ

If you have never personally trusted in Jesus Christ, Nahum 1 should sober you. It shows what it means for a city, a people, or a person to face God’s justice without mercy.

Scripture says:

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:31, NKJV)

“...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27, NKJV)

On our own, we cannot stand before God’s indignation. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23, NKJV).

But the same God who judges sin has also provided a way of rescue. Out of love, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. Jesus lived a sinless life, then willingly went to the cross. There He shed His blood to pay for our sins. He bore the judgment that we deserve.

On the third day, God raised Him from the dead. The resurrection is God’s declaration that Jesus is who He claimed to be—God, Savior, and Lord. The cross shows God’s love; the resurrection shows His power and confirms that salvation is real.

Because of what Jesus has done:

- You do not have to face God as an enemy.
- You can be forgiven, made new, and brought into a relationship with God as your Father.
- You can know Him not only as a Judge, but as your stronghold, your Shepherd, your Savior.

The Bible calls you to respond with repentance and faith: turning from sin and self-rule and turning to Jesus Christ, trusting Him as your Lord and Savior.

If your heart is stirred, you can respond to Him in simple honesty. There is no magic formula, but you might pray something like this:

*“Lord God, I confess that I have sinned against You.
I cannot stand before Your judgment on my own.
I believe that Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross for my sins,
and that You raised Him from the dead, declaring Him to be God, Savior, and Lord.
I turn from my sin and my self-centered way of living.
I ask You to forgive me, cleanse me, and make me new.
Jesus, I surrender to You as my Lord and Savior.
Teach me to follow You from this day forward.
In Your name I pray. Amen.”*

If you have truly turned to Jesus in faith, you have moved from being under judgment to being under grace. Your next steps are to begin reading the Bible regularly (a good place to start is the Gospel of John), to talk with God in prayer, and to connect with a solid, Bible-teaching study group where you can grow alongside other believers.

Nahum 1 reminds us that God is not indifferent to evil, that His patience has a limit, and that His judgments are sure. But it also reminds us *that “the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him”* (Nahum 1:7, NKJV).

May that truth deepen your reverence, strengthen your trust, and draw you closer to Jesus Christ, who saved us when He shed His blood on the cross and whose resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord.