

NAHUM: DOOM OF NINEVEH
THE WRATH OF GOD

Tuesday, July 21

Reading: Nahum 1:1-3

Nahum 1:3 *The LORD is slow to anger but great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished.*

Most people, even many Christians, do not understand the book of Nahum! They picture a God of love and mercy, so how could He be angry or pour out judgment on anyone. This is a very superficial and human view of God. Yes, God is loving and merciful. But He is also holy and just. He cannot allow sin to go unpunished. And so, Nahum gives us a glimpse of God's holiness and wrath. How are we to define God's wrath?

THE CHARACTER OF GOD – The name by which Nahum refers to God throughout this short book is LORD. This stands for the Hebrew Yahweh – the covenant name of God. Nahum wants us to see who God really is! He is the God who always keeps His promises. And He is the faithful God who will punish those who oppose Him.

THE JEALOUSY OF GOD – We usually use “jealous” in a negative sense. But when it refers to God, it has the positive sense of intense concern and care. A husband is jealous for his wife because of his complete love and loyalty to her. So, God is jealous for His people and will direct and discipline them because of His love and desire that they worship, honor, and live for Him alone. He does not want ANYTHING to come between Himself and His people.

If we are true followers of God, we should have this same kind of zeal for the things of God and for His glory. The New Testament tells us to be “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord” (Romans 12:11) and “zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14).¹

THE WRATH OF GOD – God's anger is not like human anger. We want vengeance when we don't get our own way or when someone hurts us. Our anger usually comes from a selfish, sinful place. God's anger flows from His holiness and justice. God's vengeance against sin is not the result of prejudice and has no malice in it but is based upon His unchanging holy character. It is a righteous anger. His judgment is never too much or too little. If God did not punish sin, He would not be God!

THE PATIENCE OF GOD – God's justice is always tempered with mercy. He gives people time to turn to Him and repent. He had been patient with Nineveh and even relented when they responded to Jonah's preaching. Later, God would say through the prophet Ezekiel:

“Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD.
Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live? (Ezekiel 18:23)

God gives everyone an opportunity to repent. People must either turn to God and accept His salvation or they must pay for their own sins by eternal separation from Him. The greatest display of God's wrath and His mercy was shown at the cross. Jesus took the wrath of God on sin to give us His righteousness.

¹ The words jealous, zealous, and fervent all come from the same Greek root.