

Doom and Gloom

Nahum Habakkuk Overview

(preached Pine Grove 1/24/15; Sunday PM)

Introduction

A freshman in college comes home for Christmas after spending his first semester away at college..

His parents meet him at the airport and are excited to hear about his first semester...

Well Dad, I got good news and bad news, what do y'all want to hear first?

Dad says give us the bad news first...

Ok, well the bad news is this...

I failed 3 of my 5 classes, so I am on academic probation for the spring.

I wrecked and totaled the car that y'all bought me before I left.

I was arrested twice and have a court date in February...

And I have to find a place to stay when I go back because I spent the rent money on a video games and a new set of golf clubs...

After listening to the list and seeing her husband's face turn from pink to red, the mother tries to help the situation and asks...

Well son, give us the good news...

The boy responds, "The good news is that I am out of bad news."

Tonight, I have good news and bad news...

The bad news is that we are going to look at two prophets that were sent to with messages of total destruction on two groups of peoples...

The good news is that we only have two messages of doom and gloom to look at tonight....

The books of Nahum and Habakkuk are most likely not very familiar to a lot of people...

Both books are just 3 chapters, and so you like pass right over them when you are opening your Bible...

On top of that, both books are about coming destruction...

Nahum describes the destruction that will come to the city of Nineveh...

Habakkuk will describe the destruction that will come to Israel's southern kingdom of Judah....

Now, many people have problems with the Bible's description of God as a vengeful God...

Many people don't like the stories of the OT that speak of entire cities and nations being destroyed...

Why is that?

Well, we tend to want to see God as a loving God who forgives and shows compassion...

And that is a great way to look at God.

The Bible certainly describes him in that way.

However, the Bible also describes God as a just God who never lets the guilty go unpunished...

So, how are we to feel about books in the Bible that describe the wrath of God being poured out on people?

We should praise God for being a just God, and we should honor his decisions whether he extends mercy or pours out his wrath...

The bottom line is this....

We don't know all the details of a situation.

Only God does.

And if we truly trust Him, we know that He acts right in every situation...

Let me give you an example and then we will get into our look at these two books...

Let's say you are visiting some friends and their son jumps off the couch, and the father takes the boy to a room and gives him a spanking..

In mind, you are tempted to think the punishment was a little harsh and over the top....

But what you don't know is that this was the 6th time today that he had jumped off the couch...

And his parents had warned him that another jump would end up with a spanking.

If you had the whole picture, you wouldn't jump to conclusions about the punishment...

You would realize it was necessary...

The same is true when we read of judgments against people in the Bible...

Sin has to be punished or God isn't just.

And often times, we don't understand all the details of a punishment...

All the chances that God had given people to turn from sin and believe upon him...

All the times that God had overlooked sins for another year of 10 years...

So when you read about his judgments coming down on people, you still praise the Lord for his justice...

As much as you praise him for his mercy...

If God weren't just, his forgiveness would be meaningless...

With that in mind, let's get into the book of Nahum to begin our night...

I have entitled the book of

Nahum: Jonah, Part 2

Because that is exactly what it is...

If you remember the book of Jonah, it was the story of God sending Jonah to the city of Nineveh...

Nineveh was a huge city in the Assyrian empire, that sit on the banks of the Tigris River..

The Assyrians were an enemy of the Jews and often came down from the north and fought against the Jews...

For that reason, the Jewish prophet Jonah had no interest in going to Nineveh to preach God's word...

He knew that God would use His Word to bring people to repentance, and he had no interest in seeing the Ninevites getting saved.

So, he turned and ran.

God stopped his running by sending a great storm and then a great fish to swallow Jonah...

Jonah changed his mind while in the belly of the fish and ended up going to Nineveh...

He preached a message while walking across the city over a period of 3 days...

And just like Jonah thought, the entire city repented and turned to the Lord.

It was one of the greatest salvation miracles in all the Bible...

However, the salvation of that group of Ninevites had little impact on the generation that followed...

Because Nahum is a prophet that follows Jonah only a 120-150 years later, and he preaches a message of destruction that will come to Nineveh..

Jonah, part 2 is the story of how the city of Nineveh eventually experienced the wrath of God..

Now before we get into Jonah, let's think about this...

How can a city who turned to God in faith be destroyed a 125 years later?

A couple of theories are out there....

One is that the city didn't truly repent at the preaching of Jonah..

Instead, they were falsely converted and simply went back to their old ways after he left...

That has to be rejected for two reasons...

1) God spared the city after their repentance.

He wouldn't spare it for false repentance, so it safe to assume that Jonah's preaching led to true salvations.

2) Jesus even said in Matthew 12 that the repentance of the Ninevites was real...

Therefore, we must conclude that the preaching of Jonah led to people in Ninveh truly being saved.

That leaves us with a second possibility...

The city repented but quickly slipped back into sin and idol worship in the generations that followed...

How would we explain that?

Let me give you my thoughts and here is where we can find some help in our lives....

First, I think the generation that were saved at the preaching of Jonah were truly saved...

That would be true for the grandparents and the parents and the young people who had the ability to believe after Jonah preached...

And so that generation probably did a good job of teaching their children about faith in the true God of the world...

However that second generation probably did a poorer job and it got worse as it went on...

So, you get to a point 125 years later where the city is back to its old ways and deserving of destruction...

If you look at our current world, you will see some of the same patterns...

Europe was once a place where the gospel was on fire...

In the 1700s and 1800s, Europe was a place where the Word of God was preached and obeyed...

But look at Europe now, the beautiful churches are now being turned into bars, restaurants and night clubs...

Here is a picture of one that has become an indoor skateboard park..

The same is true for our nation...

The New England states were once the place of fiery gospel preaching and preachers and good biblical churches...

But now the Lord is so absent from the culture that these states are the some of the most immoral in our country...

Here is picture of a church in Milford, CT, which once was a place of on fire gospel preaching...

It is now filled with graffiti and uninhabitable.

How does this happen?

It happens from a a combination of things....

IT happens as the word of God disappears from pulpits....

IT happens when people get laid back in the walk with God...

It happens when parents fail to teach their children and more importantly, fair to live out their faith in front of their children..

It happens when people lose the daily battle to sin and give in to their old natures and flesh and live like their unbelieving friends...

The same is happening in the south as I preach tonight...

It has already happened here...

The place that used to be home to so many bible centered churches is now home to pastor-centered churches that point people to the preacher and not the Scriptures...

The place that used to obey God out of love, not obeys God to look better in front of their neighbor but despises God in their hearts...

And the same judgment that came to Nineveh after they abandoned God is coming to place like Europe where Islam is fast becoming the dominant religion....

Where violence is now more and more common..

The same judgment that came to Nineveh is coming to New England where people elect ungodly leaders and live in towns where immorality is normal and accepted...

And judgment is also coming to our neck of the woods where Bible preaching pastors are being fired and replaced by celebrity preachers who teach feel good sermons...

Abandoning God is serious business, and it comes with serious consequences...

Let us make sure that we live the true biblical faith and teach the true faith to the next generation in hopes....

That God will spare our children and grandchildren the judgment that comes to people who don't obey the Lord.

With that said, let's look at the book of Nahum...

I have pretty much summarized in for you so far...

But here is the outline...

- I. Destruction of Nineveh Declared (1)
- II. Destruction of Nineveh Described (2)
- III. Destruction of Nineveh Deserved (3)

This is simply a message that God gave to Nahum concerning the coming destruction of Nineveh....

Let's take a quick look at this book beginning in the opening verses of chapter 1...

I. Destruction of Nineveh Declared (1)

*1 The [a]oracle of Nineveh. The book of the vision
of Nahum the Elkoshite.*

2

*A jealous and avenging God is the Lord;
The Lord is avenging and [b]wrathful.
The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries,
And He reserves wrath for His enemies.*

3

*The Lord is slow to anger and great in power,
And the Lord will by no means leave the guilty
unpunished.*

Couple things to make note of here...

1) We have no idea what and where an Elkoshite is or was...

In short, we know very little about Nahum....

So, no maps and not pictures of where he was from...

But we do that he wrote his prophecy around 650 - 630 BC.

You can look at our chart of the prophets and see that Nahum came after Jonah went to Nineveh...

Roughly 130 years after Jonah went to Nineveh...

But you also see something in the opening verses that is very important to understand about God...

Verse 2...He is jealous, vengeful, and wrathful...

But then you see the balance to that in verse 3...

He is slow to anger...

He is full of compassion and mercy...

We talked about that earlier but it is important to remember in the midst of this book of judgment against Nineveh....

That God sent a preacher to them years earlier to give the opportunity to repent and believe in Him...

The same is true for every person in the world...

Folks will go to a lake of fire, but it isn't like God didn't give them an opportunity to know Him before that day comes...

God is wrathful, but his wrath follows his offer of mercy...

So, Nahum begins with that message about God...

And then in the remaining verses of chapter 1, Nahum begins a message of destruction for the city of Nineveh...

Chapter 2 moves from declaring that Nineveh will be destroyed to describing how it will occur...

II. Destruction of Nineveh Described (2)

The long story short, God sent an army from another nation to destroy Nineveh...

The Babylonians were an army from the east that marched on the Assyrian empire and destroyed it...

Now remember, Nineveh thought they were the invincible city.

They had these extremely wide walls that protected the city...

They even had two sets of walls, but God brought a great flood to the Tigris River and we all know what water does to walls...

Picture a sand castle at the beach when the tide comes up; it breaks down very quickly...

Look at verse 6-7 of chapter 2...

6

*The gates of the rivers are opened
And the palace is dissolved.*

7

*It is fixed:
She is stripped, she is carried away,*

And that is exactly what happened according to history..

Great floods hit Nineveh and the rising waters weakened the walls and the Babylonians were able to get in and overthrow the city.

Long story short,...there is no place in the world out of the reach of the hand of God.

Chapter then moves from a description to how Nineveh would fall to the reasons she deserved to fall...

III. Destruction of Nineveh Deserved (3)

The reasons are laid out in verses 1, 4, and 9 of chapter 3..

*1 Woe to the bloody city, completely full of lies and
pillage;
Her prey never departs.*

4 All because of the many harlotries of the harlot,

*The charming one, the mistress of sorceries,
Who sells nations by her harlotries
And families by her sorceries.*

*9 Ethiopia was her might,
And Egypt too, without limits.
Put and Lubim were among her helpers.*

To save time, the sins of Nineveh that led to her destruction were this...

- a) the people were filled with lies and were cruel murderers and blood thirst warriors...
- b) the people practiced sorcery and were led astray by false gods
- c) and finally, like other cities around them, Nineveh became a city that trusted in its own strength and not in the Lord.

So, chapter 3 is the defense of why God was just in his destruction of Nineveh...

Simply put, they were a city that had come to truly know God, but the children of those true believers had quickly turned from God...

And now destruction was coming to them...

So, let's leave the destruction of Nineveh and the book of Nahum and move to the next book in the OT, which is the book of Habakkuk....

If Nahum is Jonah, part 2...

Then Habakkuk can be entitled,.....

Habakkuk: The Babylonians, part 2

If you look back at our map that we looked at earlier, you will see something very interesting...

The Babylonians were used by God to overthrow the Assyrian empire and the city of Nineveh....

But God's use of them didn't stop there.

He was also going to send them south and use them to overthrow Israel as well...

If you look back at our chart of the prophets, Habakkuk is the final prophet that comes before Israel is completely destroyed as a people..

Remember, Israel was split into two kingdoms in 930 BC, with Israel in the north and Judah in the south...

Well, the northern kingdom fell in 722 BC to the Assyrians leaving only the southern kingdom of Judah...

It will fall in stages but the date of its final fall is 586 BC when it falls to the Babylonians...

And Habakkuk is the final prophet before the southern kingdom falls and goes into exile...

And his prophecy wasn't really a message to Judah to turn and repent...

The time had already come and gone for the nation...

Destruction was coming....

The only real question was how was God going to deliver judgment to Judah...

And the book of Habakkuk was written to describe how it was going to happen...

Now, God tells Habakkuk how the destruction will come and he tells him that it will come through the Chaldeans, which was another name for the Babylonians...

So if you look back at our map, the book of Nahum says that the Babylonians will destroy Nineveh...

And the book of Habakkuk says that their line of conquest will lead them south to destroy the land of Judah as well...

Well, that kind of news give Habakkuk a little heartburn...

And that is how the book can be divided....

In chapters 1-2, we have what can be described as..

I. Habakkuk's Uneasy Feeling (1-2)

Followed by

II. Habakkuk's Unquestioned Faith (3)

In chapter 3...

So, let's look at Habakkuk and find out why he is feeling a little uneasy in the opening chapters of this book...

I. Habakkuk's Uneasy Feeling (1-2)

In chapter 1, Habakkuk gets some news that it had to take...

Look at verses 5-6, where God speaks to Habakkuk on how he will overthrow Judah because of her sins...

5

***“Look among the nations! Observe!
Be astonished! Wonder!
Because I am doing something in your days—
You would not believe if [d]you were told.***

6

***“For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans,
That [e]fierce and impetuous people
Who march [f]throughout the earth
To [g]seize dwelling places which are not theirs.***

Now, news of this floors Habakkuk....

God is going to use the Chaldeans, the Babylonians,
to deliver his judgment upon us?!

They were ruthless warriors...

They were pagan people who worshipped false
gods...

Here was Habakkuk's reaction to the news in verse
13 of chapter 1....

**13 *Your eyes are too pure to [m]approve evil,
And You can not look on wickedness with favor.
Why do You look with favor
On those who deal treacherously?
Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up
Those more righteous than they?***

Habakkuk is confused...

How can God use a people as bad as the Chaldeans
to deliver judgment upon people as righteous as the
Jews?

It doesn't make sense to him...

Let's say that the Clemson is Judah, and South
Carolina is Babylon...

Habakkuk was simply saying...

Please don't use our enemies to deliver justice to us...

Can't you pick somebody like Wake Forest or Georgia Tech to overthrow us?

Anybody but the Gamecocks....

Yet the truth is that God was going to use the worst of people to overthrow Judah...

And guess what?

Habakkuk was totally wrong in his view of people...

Israel wasn't more righteous than the Babylonians anyway...

They were both equally evil people who both deserved judgment....

And I think that was the point that God was trying to make to Israel....

You think you are worthy of being protected because you are "good people"?

Well, I will show you just how good you are...

I will use the most ruthless people to overthrow your kingdom...

Good lesson for us there as well...

We may think that you are more righteous than somebody else, but the truth is that we are just as wretched...

We are just better at covering it up at times...

No one deserves God's mercy and no one is worthy of being saved....

It is only by God's grace that any of us truly know the Lord...

So, Habakkuk is wringing his hands wondering how could God do something as awful as sending the Babylonians to overthrow them....

So in chapter 2, God answers his confusion by reminding him that the Babylonians would be judged as well....

Sure, they will be used by God as judgment on Israel, but that doesn't mean that God is pleased with them..

They are simply instruments of wrath in His hands, and they will to experience His wrath unless they repent as well..

Then God uses the rest of chapter 2 to lay out some characteristics of people who are wicked...

And they apply to the Israel as well as the Babylonians...

That brings us to chapter 3....

II. Habakkuk's Unquestioned Faith (3)

After listening to the Lord's reply of why he was sending the Babylonians...

And after being assured that they would one day be judged as well, the light in Habakkuk's head goes off...

And he finds rest in this incredible truth about God...

Those who truly trust in Him believe that He always acts rightly....

Those who have a true faith in God know that God's way are always the best...

Those who truly believe in God may not always understand His ways, but their faith in him holds fast....

In short, people with true faith live by that faith regardless of what they see in the world...

Their faith is in God even when they don't always see the reason behind what God does in the world...

Listen to what Habakkuk wrote in the opening lines of chapter 3...

3 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to [a]Shigionoth.

2

Lord, I have heard [b]the report about You and [c]I fear.

***O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years,
In the midst of the years make it known;
In wrath remember [d]mercy.***

Here is the place of rest for the person who is confused by what God is doing in the world...

Fear Him...

You simply have to get to a point in your confusion where you have faith in the Lord and your fear Him..

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...

Do you need wisdom in determining what God is doing?

Fear Him and ask for wisdom..

Habakkuk heard what the Lord said about send the Babylonians to deliver judgment to Judah.

He heard what the Lord said about eventually judging the Babylonians as well...

And he just decided to fear the Lord, trust his decisions, and beg for mercy when the Babylonians showed up to overthrow Judah..

In verses 3-15, Habakkuk simply reminds himself and his readers that God had a history of being faithful to Israel even after judgments...

And then the book ends with Habakkuk renewing his commitment to the Lord even though trouble was headed his way....

Listen to verses 16-19 to end our night...

16

***I heard and my [m]inward parts trembled,
At the sound my lips quivered.
Decay enters my bones,***

*And in my place I tremble.
Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress,
[n]For the people to arise who will invade us.*

17

*Though the fig tree should not blossom
And there be no [o]fruit on the vines,
Though the yield of the olive should fail
And the fields produce no food,
Though the flock should be cut off from the fold
And there be no cattle in the stalls,*

18

*Yet I will exult in the Lord,
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.*

19

*The Lord [p]God is my strength,
And He has made my feet like hinds' feet,
And makes me walk on my high places.*

That is the prayer of a person of incredible faith....

Verses 16 and 17 simply say that it is going to get real bad for Habakkuk and all of Judah...

No food, no flocks as the Babylonians get ready to conquer them...

Habakkuk is even trembling thinking of what is coming...

But in verse 18, we see the cry of a man who lives by faith..

Yet I will exult in the Lord.

I will rejoice in the God of my salvation...

This prayer doesn't only apply if you are in a country about to be conquered by another nation...

This prayer applies to any person entering a trial in their life...

Lord, I cancer and I am scared to death..

My hair may fall out...

My body may grow weak...

My weight may drop to under a 100 pounds,...

Yet I will exult in you Lord..

I will rejoice in the God of my salvation...

OR maybe it is...

God I just lost my job...

Don't know where money for groceries is coming from...

The kids may have to go without some stuff...

I may have to buy clothes at yard sales....

But yet I will exult in the Lord...

I will rejoice in the God of my salvation...

My strength is in the LORD..

That's a great prayer from a rather strange place in the Bible....

But it is a good prayer nonetheless.

Amen?

Conclusion

Let's wrap these books up tonight with a final thought....

Destruction comes to all sorts of people...

In the book of Nahum it came to Nineveh because they deserved it...

They had turned from God, and God was going to judge them..

In the book of Habakkuk, it was coming to Judah because they deserved it as well...

They had disobeyed God and now God was going to judge them through the Babylonians...

However, some people are caught up in trials like this through no fault of their own...

Some people are like Habakkuk...

God-fearing people who simply suffer unjustly...

When that happens and the righteous suffer, there is a temptation to ask God why me?

But we have to trust in the wisdom of God to know that he knows what he is doing....

And we have to worship Him and rejoice in Him
even when our world is collapsing around us...

I am sure that Jesus felt that same question as HE
approached the cross....

Why must I suffer for the sins of people who
deserve this even though I don't....

Yet what did Jesus do in response to that
temptation...

Yet not my will, but your Lord...

In the worst case of unjust suffering ever, Jesus
found strength in the plan of God and not in the
plans of man...

May we be just as faithful...

Let us pray.