LIFE-STUDY OF NAHUM

MESSAGE ONE

JEHOVAH'S JUDGMENT ON NINEVEH

Scripture Reading: Nahum 1—3

The book of Nahum is the opposite of the book of Jonah. Both books deal with the city of Nineveh, but whereas Jonah brought, or extended, God's salvation to that sinful city, Nahum brought God's judgment upon Nineveh. Jonah reveals that God in His salvation is the God of all the peoples of the earth, not only of the Jews but also of the Gentiles. Nahum reveals that God is also the God of all peoples in His judgment. Thus, God is the God of all peoples both in judgment and in salvation.

The book of Nahum shows us why God judges a city. In this book we see both the fact and the cause of God's judgment on Nineveh. God extended His salvation to Nineveh, but Nineveh was sinful and invaded Israel.

I. THE INTRODUCTORY WORD

In Nahum 1:1 we have the introductory word.

A. The Meaning of the Name Nahum

In Hebrew Nahum means "comfort" and "avenge," signifying that Jehovah God comforts His elect, Israel, and avenges Israel of her enemy, Nineveh.

B. The Time of Nahum's Ministry

The time of Nahum's ministry was about 713 B.C. That was the year in which Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, invaded Israel.

C. The Place of His Ministry

The place of Nahum's ministry was the southern kingdom

of Judah. History tells us that Nahum grew up in Galilee, in a town called Elkosha, which is near Capernaum. The name *Capernaum* may mean "the city of Nahum," indicating that it had much to do with Nahum. Although Nahum was a northerner, the place of his ministry was in the south.

D. The Object of His Ministry

The object of Nahum's ministry was the great city of Nineveh. The cities of Babel and Nineveh were built by Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-11) and became the capitals of the nations of Babylon and Assyria. Nimrod, the first type of Antichrist, was the first to oppose God, and both of these nations were strong figures of mankind in their opposing of God. Actually, Assyria was the first nation to come and devastate Israel, invading Israel in 713 B.C. (2 Kings 18:13—19:37), more than one hundred years before the Babylonian invasion in 606 B.C.

E. The Subject

The subject of the book of Nahum is Jehovah's judgment on Nineveh as the capital of the evil Assyria.

F. The Central Thought

The central thought of Nahum is that Jehovah judged Assyria, avenging Israel of her enemy to restore her for her comfort.

G. The Sections

The book of Nahum has three sections: the introductory word (1:1); Jehovah as the majestic Judge (1:2-7); and Jehovah's judgment on Nineveh (1:8—3:19).

II. JEHOVAH AS THE MAJESTIC JUDGE

In 1:2-7 Jehovah is revealed as the majestic Judge. First, we see that Jehovah is the Judge and then we see the majesty of Jehovah as the Judge.

A. Jehovah as the Judge

As the Judge, Jehovah is a jealous God and One who avenges. He avenges and is full of wrath; He takes vengeance

on His adversaries; and He reserves wrath for His enemies (v. 2). He is slow to anger and great in power, and He will by no means clear the guilty (v. 3). In verse 7 the prophet declares, "Jehovah is good, / A stronghold in a day of distress; / And He knows those who take refuge in Him."

B. The Majesty of Jehovah as the Judge

Verses 4 through 6 speak of the majesty of Jehovah as the Judge. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; He dries up all the rivers; the mountains quake because of Him; and the earth is heaved up at His presence (vv. 4-5). Hence, the prophet asks, "Who can stand before His indignation, / And who can maintain himself in the fierceness of His anger? / His wrath is poured out like fire, / And the rocks are broken down by Him" (v. 6).

III. JEHOVAH'S JUDGMENT ON NINEVEH

The remainder of the book of Nahum (1:8—3:19) speaks of Jehovah's judgment on Nineveh. Here Jehovah's judgment on this evil city is fully portrayed.

A. The Verdict concerning Nineveh's Destruction by the Medes and Babylonians

First, the Judge pronounces His verdict concerning Nineveh's destruction by the Medes and Babylonians in 612 B.C. (1:8-12a, 14). Verse 8 says that when the time comes, God would use an overflowing flood to make a full end of her place. Chapter two shows us this flood. Nineveh was built on the Tigris River and was completely surrounded by water. This was a protection to Nineveh. Then in 612 B.C. the Medes and the Babylonians came together to attack Nineveh, and they found a way to open the gates of the river and they flooded the city (2:6).

B. The Promise of Comfort to Judah

In 1:12b-13, 15 we see Jehovah's promise of comfort to Judah. In verse 13 He says, "Now I will break his yoke from off you / And will snap your bonds asunder." "His yoke" refers

to the yoke which Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, had placed on Israel. First, the Assyrians came to devastate Israel. Then God used Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar to defeat the Assyrians, and this became a kind of deliverance to Israel.

Verse 15a goes on to say, "Behold, upon the mountains / The feet of him who bears the glad news, / Who announces peace!" This refers to the announcement of Assyria's defeat by the Babylonians and was a word of comfort to Israel.

C. A Vision of the Destruction of Nineveh

Nahum 2:1-13 presents a vision of the destruction of Nineveh.

1. The Swift Activity of the Babylonian Armies to Destroy Nineveh

Verses 1 through 4 describe the swift activity of the Babylonian armies to destroy Nineveh. The Babylonians were used by God for this purpose. Thus, verse 3 says, "The shield of His mighty men is red; / The valiant men are clad in scarlet; / The chariots flash with the shining of steel / In the day of His preparation, / And the spears are brandished."

2. The Way of the King of Assyria and His Queen to Encounter the Babylonian Attack

Verses 5 through 7 speak of the way of the king of Assyria and his queen to encounter the Babylonian attack.

3. The Babylonian Armies' Plunder of the Wealth and Their Slaughter of the People of Nineveh

Verses 8 through 13 record the Babylonian armies' plunder of the wealth of the people of Nineveh and their slaughter of the people.

4. The Restoration of the Excellency of Israel

"For Jehovah restores / The excellency of Jacob / As the excellency of Israel" (v. 2a). This indicates that the destruction of Nineveh is for the restoration of the excellency of Israel. God used the Babylonians with the Medes to invade

Assyria and thereby to save Israel from the tyranny of the Assyrians.

D. The Devastation of the People of Nineveh

At the very beginning of chapter three, Nahum, speaking about Nineveh, says, "Woe to the bloody city! / She is all full of lies and pillage; / The prey does not depart" (v. 1). The chapter goes on to describe in detail the devastation of the people of Nineveh (vv. 2-17). Significantly, verse 17 mentions locusts. "Your princes are like the locust swarm, / And your officials are like hordes of locusts, / Which camp in the hedges / On a cold day, / But when the sun arises, they flee away, / And the place where they are is unknown." This indicates that the Assyrians also were locusts devastating Israel. These Assyrian locusts were eventually defeated by the Babylonian locusts.

E. The Miserable End of the King of Assyria

Nahum concludes his prophecy with a word concerning the miserable end of the king of Assyria (vv. 18-19).

The main point of the book of Nahum is that while God was chastising Israel and punishing the nations, He always did what was necessary to preserve Israel for the purpose of manifesting Christ. God's wonderful preserving act was carried out by the locusts. God used one kind of locust to deal with another kind of locust in order to preserve Israel. God's purpose in preserving Israel is to bring forth Christ.

Although this book does not say anything about Christ directly and does not refer to Christ, the goal is still the manifestation of Christ. The preserving of Israel is for the purpose that Christ might have a channel—the reserved and preserved Israel—through which to be brought forth. Regarding this, all the minor prophets are one, and the book of Nahum is just one small link on the chain of their revelation. Thus, once again we see that, according to the minor prophets, God's chastising of Israel and His punishing of the nations are for the manifestation of Christ.