

Small Group Guide
DESTRUCTION AND DELIVERANCE
Cleary Baptist Church June 5, 2011 Nahum and Zephaniah

Study the Text . . .

Nahum

Nahum's prophecy highlights the wrath of God in his response to sin and sinners. He speaks particularly of the destruction coming to Nineveh. There is relief promised to what is left of Israel (referring to the kingdom of Judah). But even with relief coming, there is still a reminder in the language that God had used Assyria to punish His people. This prophecy focuses more on the destruction coming to Nineveh rather than restoration coming to Israel. From either perspective, Nineveh's or Israel's, the clear truth is that God is jealous for His glory.

Nahum 1:2-8

- Review verses 2 and 3. Do they describe the characteristics of a God you would like opposing you?
- The particular words used here and the subject matter discussed incite fear in those who reflect on them. Should this fear only be the response of those of Nineveh?
- A healthy fear of God can be a natural response of worship. The tendency may be to read these verses from the perspective of Nineveh. Reread verses 2-8 as a song of praise and adoration toward the God of all creation. Also read them from the perspective of God's people who will be freed from the oppression of this wicked nation when they are destroyed.
- The character traits that incite fear are still there to be observed but they are accompanied by other qualities of God's perfect holiness that also inspire confidence and trust along with fear and awe. (v. 3 & 7)
- Do you hate sin and evil the way God does? If not, do you think that is a sin you should repent of?
- Do you think God's patience ever runs out for those who continue in rebellion against him?
- When a person truly comes to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, will they continue habitually and consistently in rebellion against God?

Zephaniah

Zephaniah's prophecy is directed toward Judah and all people. Where Nahum dealt more specifically with Nineveh, Zephaniah from the opening verses broadens the spectrum of those who will receive God's wrath to include the whole earth. Not only does this prophecy address a broad spectrum of people, it addresses a wider range of time. There are certainly parts of Zephaniah's declaration that speak of more immediate judgment, but there is great attention devoted to the final judgment on the "Day of the Lord."

Zephaniah 1:14-18

- We again see that the anger of the Lord burns against those who have sinned against him. The day of the Lord is to be a day of wrath.
- In 1:6 and 1:12 we see what demands punishment in the eyes of the Lord. Interestingly, in these verses we see language of guilt not in opposing the Lord but in complacency and not valuing Him rightly.
- His people would keep God's festivals in part, but give themselves also to worship other gods. (1:5)
- However this complacency or syncretism as seen here is clearly called opposition in other parts of God's word. Consider Ex. 20:3, Mt 12:30, and James 4:4.\
- In contrast to the wrath due to the enemies of God Nahum 1:7 reminds us of the stronghold He is for those who take refuge in Him.

Zephaniah 3:14-20

- Zephaniah also looks forward to the future restoration of Israel, and to the work of their deliverer who will ultimately bring about that relief and blessing.
- The Lord is a deliverer who takes away the judgments against Israel.
- He deals with Israel's oppressors. He changes Israel's shame to praise.
- Take note of where the credit belongs in this passage. God says "I will..." (v.18-20). The Lord is mighty to save. He is faithful to the promises he has made to the His people.

Discuss

- Discuss how you fear things or people as opposed to how you fear God. Is there a difference in how you would describe these fears? How has this study changed or influenced your understanding of types of fears? Are all fears good or bad?
- Fearing God is often a simple response to life experience or parts of scripture. How can you develop a discipline of fearing God in a healthy way?
- Remember that you did nothing to put yourself in the right with the Lord. A healthy fear may be the result of the realization that by all accounts we should be enemies of God. How can you make a habit or discipline of rehearsing these truths?
- How can you incorporate your deserved destruction and the deliverance you receive daily into your conversations and relationships as you are making disciples?
- What's the relationship between humility and genuine seeking of God (Zeph. 2:3)?
- Close by reading Zephaniah 3:14-20. Discuss how God's judgment of the wicked contrasts with the eternal love, hope, and joy of God's people who have been saved from their sins. Encourage your group to meditate on Zeph. 3:17 before you close in prayer together.