

SOUTHLAND CHURCH

THE BOOKS OF
**JONAH
& NAHUM**

5 Day Devotional



foundations
daily devotional

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Versions of scripture quotations are noted.

INTRODUCTION

Jonah and Nahum are part of the genre of Scripture called the Minor Prophets. They are called minor because of their short length, not because their contents are less significant than the Major Prophets. In Biblical times, the prophets worked to refocus the people to live in faithfulness and obedience to God. Many of their writings call the people to repentance and would warn the people of coming judgment if they did not obey God. But the prophets did not just preach doom and gloom they also preached a message of salvation and coming glory. Sometimes prophets wrote of specific future events where they had seen a vision and other times they just proclaimed God's promises. This devotional will look at two prophets from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Jonah and Nahum, who ministered to the Assyrians in Nineveh about 150-200 years apart from each other. They were both sent by God because of the wickedness of the Assyrian people, although they had differing messages.

DAY 1



READ: Jonah 1

During the time of Jonah the Assyrians, of which Nineveh was the flourishing capital, were one of Israel's great foes. The book of Jonah depicts it as a wicked city worthy of destruction. God sent Jonah to preach to the Ninevites of their coming destruction and of God's forgiveness if they would repent. The hated Assyrians, Israel's arch enemy, would be forgiven by God if they repented. Jonah was being asked to preach repentance in one of the most dangerous places on earth, in a godless, faithless city filled with debauchery and corruption and tell them of their need for repentance. No wonder Jonah ran to Tarshish, which was in the opposite direction! But the Lord sent a storm that threatened the ship (vs. 4). The sailors worked hard to try to save the ship by throwing cargo overboard to lighten the vessel while Jonah slept below. The captain confronted Jonah to call on his god which exposed Jonah's guilt. Jonah must be thrown overboard to save the ship and the crew. The men tried to row to land but could not (vs. 13) and when the situation became impossible they reluctantly threw Jonah overboard in full acknowledgement of God and His power, and pled with God not to hold them responsible for Jonah's death (vs. 14). The sea then became calm and the sailors greatly feared the Lord. Jonah was then swallowed by a great fish and was inside the fish for three days and three nights.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

- Jonah was being sent with a message of forgiveness to the most brutal place on earth. This shows that even our worst enemies can repent and be forgiven. Ask the Lord to show you someone in your life who is in need of God's forgiveness. Ask Him to show you how you can pray for this person and how God wants to use you to testify to His love and forgiveness.

2. When we repent God forgives! What a glorious God we serve – a God who forgives! Ask the Lord to show you how He has forgiven you. Thank Him for this forgiveness and for the wonderful blessing of being one of His children.
3. Pray for the Canadian Church to hear the message of God’s forgiveness if they repent and turn from their wickedness. Ask the Lord to revive the church to be fully obedient to Him.

DAY 2



READ: Jonah 2

Jonah is sinking to the depths of the sea with currents swirling around him. Waves had swept over him and the waters engulfed him. As He was plummeting into the waters he cried out to the Lord who answered his prayer. Jonah knew that he deserved death and that God showed him extraordinary mercy in saving him. This is a prayer that we all can relate to as we all deserve death. Our good God has chosen to put before us a choice – to follow Him and be saved or to turn away from Him and die. Salvation comes from the Lord (v. 9). God saved Jonah’s life and the fish spit him out on dry land (v. 10).



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask Jesus to show you where you would be today if He had not saved you. What would your life look like today without Him?
2. Write out ten things that you are thankful to God for in your life right now.
3. Pray for believers to actively walk in thanksgiving to God for salvation, living lives completely submitted to Him in response for what He has done for us.

DAY 3



READ: Jonah 3-4

God reminds Jonah of his task to preach His message to the Ninevites (3:1) and this time Jonah willingly obeys. The message was simply that in forty days the city would be destroyed. The king believed and issued a proclamation that everyone should fast, call on the Lord and give up their evil ways – perhaps God will change His mind and they will not perish? Much to the irritation of Jonah, God does spare the city and did not bring upon Nineveh the destruction that was threatened. Chapter three stands out in the Bible as one of the greatest revivals of history. God’s gracious offer of salvation extended to all who would repent and turn to Him. You would think that Jonah would be pleased that God spared the city and that the people repented but Jonah is angered by God’s compassion (4:1). Jonah knew from the very beginning that God wouldn’t destroy Nineveh because He always shows love and compassion which was why Jonah didn’t want to preach there in the first place! The Lord responds to Jonah by providing a vine to shield the sulking prophet from the hot sun. God then made the vine wither and die,

leaving Jonah exposed to the elements. The message is clear. The world belongs to God and it is filled with God's creations. If Jonah can care about something so little as a vine should God not care about the inhabitants of Nineveh that number 120,000 people? God continued to show grace to His stubborn prophet by rebuking Jonah in this way. God is still patient with people and sends prophets, missionaries, pastors and teachers to warn them to turn to Him but God's patience will not last forever. Judgement will come; we will see that in Nahum.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. God's compassion for the Ninevites clearly shows that He has concern for the whole world and is sovereign over nature and human affairs. Thank Jesus for His sovereignty and love of all His creatures. Praise Him for being a God who cares, loves, is gracious, merciful and kind.
2. Jonah had some of his own ideas about Nineveh and God's compassion. It can be easy for us too to think that we know what God should do in a particular circumstance. Ask the Lord to reveal to you if you what assumptions you have made in the past. Pray that you would learn to follow God's ways and trust Him in all things, even if you do not understand what He is doing.
3. Sometimes we can forget how patient God is and how full of compassion He is. God gives people chance after chance to turn to Him. But eventually time runs out. Pray for the Canadian Church to turn to God in complete surrender, before time runs out.

DAY 4



READ: Nahum 1

Just like Jonah, Nahum was from the Northern Kingdom of Israel and was sent to Nineveh with a message of destruction. He went there about 150-200 years after Jonah preached his message to the Ninevites but circumstances were very different. After Jonah went to Nineveh Assyria's borders expanded and they tried to invade the Northern Kingdom of Israel but failed. Slowly they became victorious and began to exile the tribes of Israel leaving only Judah in the Southern Kingdom. It was a huge catastrophe for the people of God. The conversion of the Ninevites in response to the preaching of Jonah over a century earlier had been short lived. They soon became ruthless, returning to their former wicked ways. Following Jonah, Zephaniah, as part of his message to Judah, prophesied the destruction of Assyria's and that Nineveh would become a wasteland. It was Nahum whom God would send to Nineveh with their final warning. Although God is slow to anger their time had run out. God was not letting them off the hook. We can see God's sovereignty as He allowed the nation of Assyria to rise and become a powerful empire and then He brings it to an end. It is God who controls history and the prophets acted as the mouthpiece of God to warn the people of God's ways.

Chapter 1 of Nahum is an acrostic poem where each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It proclaims that Nineveh will fall. God's enemies will be punished by Him and God's people will be delivered from their oppression. What is bad news for Nineveh is good news for God's children. This chapter gives us insight into what God is like. Although God is love, and although He is forgiving, people still need to ask for His forgiveness and change their ways. To those who turn to Him He is a refuge but for those who plot against Him He is filled with vengeance and wrath. Jonah went to Nineveh to preach repentance showing us that no one is beyond God's reach but for those who will not repent or fall back into their sinful ways there will be consequences. Nahum shows us that God does not delight in punishing but He will act against the guilty. In order for there to be love there must be justice as well, God embodies both.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Verse 3 tells us that God is slow to anger but that He will not leave the guilty unpunished. Thank the Lord for His love and for His justice. What else does this chapter tell you about the character of God? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the power of God in this chapter and spend some time meditating on it.
2. Verse 7 tells us that God is good, a refuge in times of trouble for those who trust in Him. Ask the Lord to show you a time when He was your refuge? How has He been your helper in times of trouble? Thank Him for this!
3. When we read the prophets we can take comfort in God's consistency. God is always the same, He does not change in character; His is a unique combination of justice and mercy. Even today we can trust that God will exercise mercy as long as He can but when it is persistently refused He must exercise justice. Thank God for His never-changing character.

DAY 5



READ: Nahum 2-3

This second chapter of Nahum describes in fuller detail how the Assyrians will be destroyed. First we read of how the soldiers are struggling to defend the city of Nineveh as the invading army closes in on the city (2:3-5). Then we read of the gates of the river being burst open (2:6) causing devastation to the city as the city falls and is plundered (2:6-9). The next three verses (2:10-12) describe the destruction of Nineveh and its termination as a world power. Finally the Lord speaks, "I am against you" (2:13). Nineveh's fall will not be caused by merely natural forces or the superior power of her attacker but because it is the will of the Lord.

Nahum then describes that Assyria is being judged for her wickedness and evil practices. This city will receive a fitting punishment as God will humiliate the city by having it conquered and devastated. Nahum uses the analogy of a dishonored queen who is dragged off and publicly shamed by her skirt being lifted in a

humiliating display of her nakedness (3:5). Verse seven asks a rhetorical question – “who will grieve for her?” Nineveh will receive no sympathy. Nahum then compares her with the fall of Thebes (3:8-11). Thebes was a great capital of upper Egypt that fell to Assyria. If anyone thinks that it is impossible for Assyria to fall they should remember that Thebes fell. Nineveh’s fortresses looked fine (3:12) but they will fall easily and be fatally wounded (3:19). This time it was too late for Nineveh to change. There is no remedy, they will be utterly destroyed. Today Nineveh is a desert wasteland. This once great world empire is completely gone.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Although God is slow to anger He will not leave the guilty unpunished. Evil will not triumph. What comfort does knowing this bring to you?
2. God is a God of love but He is also a God of judgement. Nineveh fell because of her godlessness, violence, lust and greed. What does this tell you about the holiness of God?
3. Although God used Assyria to punish His people for their disobedience, He did not allow Judah to be annihilated. God’s plan was for the Messiah to come from the line of David so God left a remnant. God is in control! Thank God for this truth!

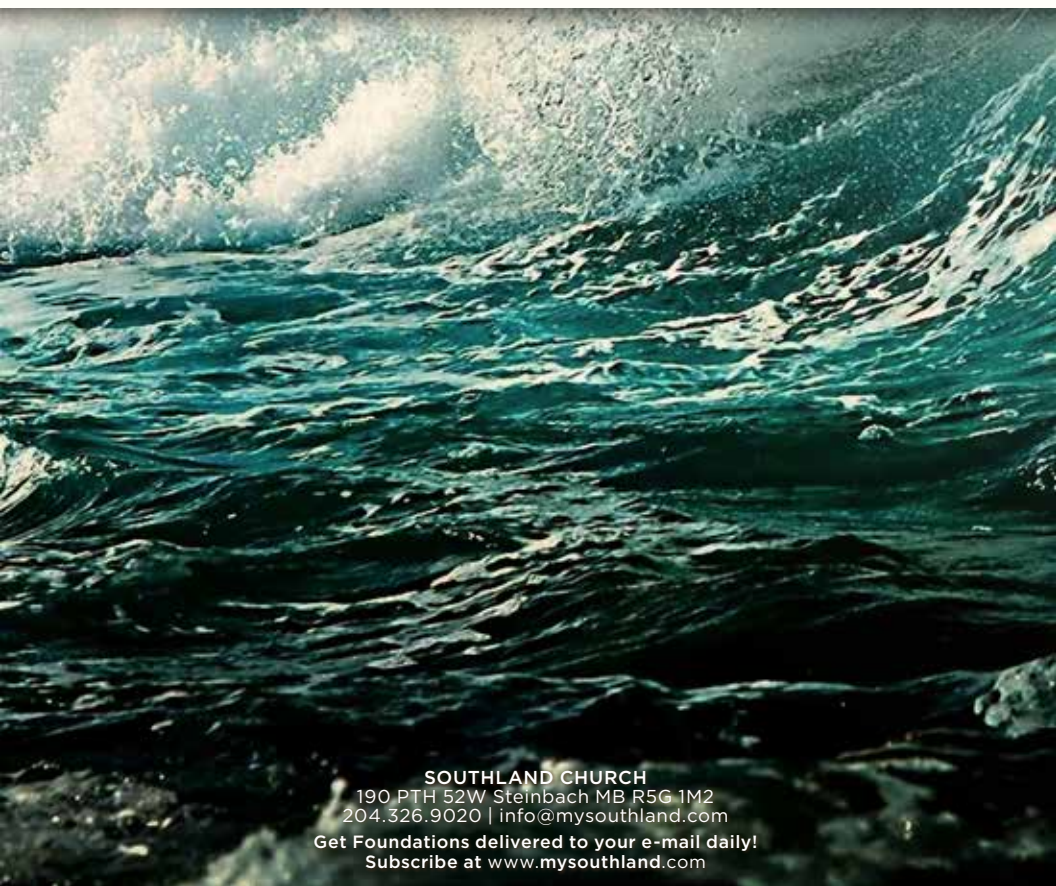


The Books of Jonah and Nahum

God's compassion is boundless but will the Ninevites listen, see their need for repentance and follow Him wholeheartedly? The Lord is slow to anger but He will also bring about justice according to His timetable. The prophets Jonah and Nahum speak to this message.

Nahum 1:3 (NIV)

"The LORD is slow to anger but great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished."



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