

“The Divine Warrior”
(Nahum 1:1-15):
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July 29th, 2007

Introduction:

NIV Nahum 1:1 An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. ² The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies. ³ The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet. ⁴ He rebukes the sea and dries it up; he makes all the rivers run dry. Bashan and Carmel wither and the blossoms of Lebanon fade. ⁵ The mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it. ⁶ Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; the rocks are shattered before him. ⁷ The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him, ⁸ but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh; he will pursue his foes into darkness. ⁹ Whatever they plot against the LORD he will bring to an end; trouble will not come a second time. ¹⁰ They will be entangled among thorns and drunk from their wine; they will be consumed like dry stubble. ¹¹ From you, O Nineveh, has one come forth who plots evil against the LORD and counsels wickedness. ¹² This is what the LORD says: "Although they have allies and are numerous, they will be cut off and pass away. Although I have afflicted you, O Judah, I will afflict you no more. ¹³ Now I will break their yoke from your neck and tear your shackles away." ¹⁴ The LORD has given a command concerning you, Nineveh: "You will have no descendants to bear your name. I will destroy the carved images and cast idols that are in the temple of your gods. I will prepare your grave, for you are vile." ¹⁵ Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, and fulfill your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed.

Background

The city of Nineveh is being judged. Just a century or so ago, Jonah had gone to Nineveh and preached to them to repent and they heeded God's message, and judgment was diverted, but now a hundred years later, Nineveh had once again fallen into sin and the Lord gives a prophetic message through Nahum about the fate that awaited Nineveh. More specifically, Nineveh, as a part of the Assyrian empire is being judged for her harsh treatment of God's people. It was probably written around the time of King Manasseh or Josiah who lived during the 7th century BC.

What was the purpose of the book?

The purpose of the book was to encourage Judah that the hardship she was suffering from foreign nations would end and God would hold their oppressors responsible. And where does the encouragement from? Not just from changing circumstances, but rather from God himself and his unchanging character.

What we discover about God from Nahum is that he is a Divine Warrior. He is a God that will fight for his people with justice. And that is a common characterization of God throughout scripture in both testaments. We see it most vividly with the story of Moses and the Israelites when God delivers his people from Egypt. God fights for them. This idea of God as the divine

warrior not only carries throughout the Old Testament, but it also rings true in the New Testament as well, in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is not only Savior of the world, but the judge of it too. Often times our view of Jesus is far too tame. We see his compassion, love and gentleness, but we miss his wrath, judgment and holiness. But those are there too, in the person of Jesus and throughout the New Testament. The Christian's hope is based on basically, these characteristics of Christ. When Jesus returns we will all yearn and long for him to come with wrath, judgment, and holiness. It's in the parable of the sheep and the goats.

Matthew 25:31-33 31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

That's judgment language. He's going to look on one side and smile and love and welcome them for their faith in him that led them to work out all sorts of merciful acts and kindness. And then he'll look over the other side and judge and condemn and send to hell those who rejected him and didn't act out kindness in his name.

This idea of Jesus as judge is found throughout the book of Revelation.

Revelation 6:9-17 9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. 10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" 11 Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed. 12 I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, 13 and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. 14 The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. 15 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. 16 They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Jesus will subdue his enemies once and for all. He will reward the faithful and condemn the faithless.

The next time you're reading the scriptures look for these commonalities, they're actually quite obvious and at the surface, but what I hope it will do is give a balanced and correct understanding of God and Jesus.

There are many times in life where we cannot fight for ourselves. Either because of an unjust system, or because of the non-action we choose to take as Christians. An unjust system in many parts of the world will take basic freedoms such as religion, safety, land ownership, and such things like that. A person is absolutely powerless to defend themselves against such a system and it's in those times that we trust in God as the divine warrior. In our society we could have been defrauded of our money or cheated by a coworker or discriminated against and yes, of course we could report it, we could take it to court and there are many means by which we could retaliate. But at times, God's going to tell us to be still, turn the other cheek, forgive, forget

because vengeance is mine. And it's the vengeance of God that allows us to move on, knowing that God will take care of it, in his time, in his way. And that's why we need to see God as our divine warrior. Let's take a deeper look from Nahum.

God is a jealous God. We learned about God's jealousy from the book of Hosea.

God is an avenging God. Vengeance carries the connotation of retribution or pay back. God's will avenge all that acted unjustly against his people.

God is a wrathful God. Wrath is the carrying out of God's justice. It's dishing out the punishment. God isn't one who's all talk and no action. He's not one who's bark is bigger than his bite. His wrath is perfectly carried out according to his justice.

God is a patient (long-suffering) God.

The bible teaches that God delays his judgment so that there is more opportunity for people to repent and come to know him as God.

God is a just God.

And God is good. He is a refuge in times of trouble. And he cares for those who trust in him.

Look at verse 7 of this passage. It says in one breath two very opposite ends of the spectrum type of things. He's good, He's a refuge. He cares. He's a destroyer and pursuer.

⁷ The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him, ⁸ but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh; he will pursue his foes into darkness.

And we often fall into trouble because we often times cannot see how two seemingly opposite attributes can exist in a single person. *For example you ask some children, who's more fun to play with, mom or dad? And I think nine out of ten will say, "dad." Dad plays video games with me, wrestles with me, has water fights with me, he plays ball with me. Yeah, yeah, for sure dad is more fun. But immediately thereafter you ask, who's more scary, mom or dad? And I know there are a lot of scary moms out there, but for the most part the kids will say, without blinking an eyelash, "Dad! Definitely dad is scarier." How is that possible? How can dad at one time be the most fun person in the world and the scariest too? Because men are more like God and therefore better, right? Of course not. Because in being parents dads want to be the world to their kids in fun and at the same they time, because they love them, they can be the scariest disciplinarians.*

This misunderstanding of God or this inability to accept multiple characteristics of God, we aren't to blame God. He can't help that he's who he is. We can't go and blame God for the attributes he possesses. And God is perfect in any case. So we blame the church or Christians in general, because that's the next best thing to blame. But God forbid we blame ourselves or think that with my incredible education and limitless experience in theological matters, that I could possibly be wrong. But isn't that how we often times quite arrogantly approach these issues?

I believe it stems from errors in our thinking.

1. We assume we're right. I think the number one error is that we assume our definition is correct.
2. We don't use scripture to back up our position. Okay, here's what you need to know 1) if you consider yourself a Christian and 2) about us Christians. And what I'm about to say is essentially the same. If you consider yourself a Christian, believe it or not, what you believe about God, human kind and the world we live in, also known as a 'worldview', come primarily from the bible. Did you know that? Yeah, throw in philosophy, throw in education, throw in the sciences, and throw in your life experiences. But for every person who calls themselves Christian, our primary source for what we believe about these things is the bible.

And for those of you who are not Christians and have wondered about this religion and it's people and the so-called 'conservative' views that they hold and they seem to against everything and be 'for' very little, well it's because we're a people of the Book. Ideally, and most of the times it's not the case, we're supposed to think, believe and act according to the book.

3. We don't assume a position of humility and understand our mental limitations. So whether you're a Christian already or a person that's looking into Christianity, our problem is that we assume we know more than God and for some reason we do it more with the Christian God than with any other god. We'll pay thousands of dollars to visit the eastern religions and search for the better way and sit under a great respected teacher, but people refuse to crack open the bible or step into a church.
Without humility we will never find God. But if we humble ourselves and come with a posture of learning and teachability then God will come and reveal himself to us.
4. We also assume that for God to be one thing he must compromise the other thing and we spoke about that already.

All of these attributes, from jealousy, the wrath, and compassion all stem from his holiness. Holiness is God's perfect moral compass. And so this is the Divine Warrior.

Our Application

1. have a better understanding of all the attributes of God, not just the ones we're comfortable with, but all of them, even the difficult ones.
2. Trust in Jesus as our divine warrior knowing he will be either our savior and judge.
3. Worship

Revelation 19:11-21 11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the

great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great." 19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. 20 But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. 21 The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

Man, doesn't that get the adrenaline pumping through your veins? Just like all the movies we watch where good triumphs over evil. Vigilante justice movies. Epic fantasies. Cops and robbers. Science fiction. When good triumphs and evil people and creatures get their due we cheer. The good guys won and the bad guys lost. That should lead to 1) worship, 2) worship and 3) worship.

Conclusion:

J.I. Packer said this in *Knowing God*. People who know their God have great thoughts of God and attempt great things for God. The first is what we think about God, our theology. The second is our action and what we do for God. Both things are acts of worship. Knowing that God is our divine warrior in justice, holiness, and goodness, should cause us to do those two things. Think great things about God and attempt great things for God.