

## THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIORITY – TO KNOW GOD (Nahum 1:2-7)

As a Christian, we need to have priorities ... We need to know what our purpose is, otherwise we wander aimlessly, - we either belong to the Lord, or we don't ... there ought not to be any 'half-measures'.

If you think, - for a moment, - how some Christians want to be *very good* people so as to help others by being more caring and more helpful ... and some want of them to be *very good* people by looking after the church buildings .. and even to be *very good* people by setting aside time to have an interest in the Bible, and the things of the Bible. ... The one thing that *really* sets the Christian apart, though ... and the priority that is above everything else is the priority of knowing and enjoying the character of God. That is why we are Christians, - it is why we are saved ... to *enjoy* God as our Heavenly Father.

The story is told of a missionary going out to work in China, and someone said to him, "You must really love the Chinese". And the missionary replied with a surprising answer, "No, I don't love the Chinese particularly, but I love God" ... And that is the priority.

Jesus prayed for those who would believe in Him by faith that they would be convinced of this priority, [Jn. 17:3](#) *this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God*. Peter wrote, [II Peter 3:18](#) *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. Paul wrote, [II Tim. 1:12](#) *I know whom I have believed* ... Therefore, to know God is the absolute priority of priorities! As the catechism teaches, "Man's chief end is to know God and to glorify Him forever".

So, what kind of a God is He? What is His *character*? *Who is He*? ... Those are not silly questions! They are very important for we must know Who God is in order to believe in the *true* God. Indeed, there are many deviations from Him ... and this is how the children of Israel had gotten themselves into such a confused spiritual state for they managed to mix up the worship of the gods of idolatry with the worship of Jehovah ... forgetting that He had said, [Ex. 20:3](#) *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*.

When you ask the question, Who is God? ... you can get all kinds of weird and wonderful answers ... The only place you can go to get the right answer is to the Bible. In fact, there is no right answer other than which is expressed in the Scriptures.

And so Nahum explains, **Nahum 1:2** God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. **3** The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. **4** He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. **5** The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. **6** Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. **7** The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.

That is a mighty description of the character of God! ... Nahum here was prophesying against Nineveh, the great northern city of Assyria, the oldest and most populated city of the ancient Assyrian Empire, situated on the eastern bank of the River Tigris, opposite modern Mosul in Iraq. Assyria was the vast region stretching across modern northern Iraq, north-eastern Syria, south-eastern Turkey, and the north-western fringes of Iran.

The Ninevites had been a major force in capturing the ten northern tribes of Israel that originally had followed Jeroboam, rather than Solomon's son Rehoboam ... and the mighty armies of Assyria also surrounded Jerusalem and its King Hezekiah. Because of how they had treated Israel, God announced He would tolerate their behaviour no longer and He promised to bring judgment upon the Assyrians ... and this prophecy of Nahum relates to that judgment.

Now, the Scriptures have four fundamental and foundational truths about God, and these truths affect the nations with regard to how they consider Him ... or *don't*, as the case may be.

Firstly, whether they accept it or not, He is one God (**Dt. 6:4** Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one Lord). Regardless of other deities being produced by the nations, He is the one distinct, only, living, real, and genuine God *ever*. All others, then, are false and have never truly existed but are only the fabrication of men for God declared He is unique, **Is. 45: 5** I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me.

A second foundational truth is that He is one God in three distinct persons, - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ... How can that be? How can three

persons be actually only one? That, of course, defies our understanding ... but it is the clear teaching of Holy Scripture.

A third foundational truth is that God is a Spirit and forever He has been a Spirit, **Jn. 4:24** *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

The fourth foundational truth the Bible makes absolutely clear is that God is the Creator. In fact, it is so fundamentally important it is the truth with which God begins the Scriptures and upon which the Scriptures are founded, **Gen. 1:1** *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* It is an absurdity for anyone to claim to know God and yet to discount the very first words of the Bible. If they begin by disbelieving what He says at the very beginning, - in verse one, - they have no business going any further until they *do* believe it for if the first words cannot be trusted, how would you expect to be able to trust *any* of it?!

Since ... there is only one God, in three distinct persons, essentially a Spirit, and He is the Creator ... how then does the prophecy of Nahum present the character of God Who is at the centre of a world that was determined to have nothing to do with Him?

Firstly, regardless of others, He is a God of uncompromising justice. His justice is build upon and determined by His own perfect holy character, - He judges people by His perfect standards. He makes the laws, and He determines the standards that must be met. Since He created everything for His own pleasure and in His own time, He has the right to do as He pleases ... and to make decisions as He pleases. He has no constraints pressing down upon Him, and He is answerable to none. He has the total and perfect right to set out the principles by which His creation must function and operate, without any outside co-operation or interference. ... He has the absolute authority to do what He wants to do.

If someone He has created chooses to contradict His laws and violate His rule, God decides that person legitimately falls under His righteous judgment. When God declares him guilty ... he has no place of appeal! God's decision is final. On the more positive side, as long as the person is prepared to be obedient to God, that person comes under the blessing of God ... That is because, in His wisdom, God has entrusted to Himself the authority to declare judgment upon the rebel, and blessing upon the obedient.

Therefore, Nahum announces, <sup>2</sup> *God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.* <sup>3</sup> *The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked ...* Here is a side of God many would prefer not to highlight. To them, this is the less appealing, - unattractive, - side of God ... and many would steer away from it. However, it is a fact the Bible teaches us God is jealous, He wreaks vengeance on, and He reserves wrath for His enemies. ... It sounds terrible, but that is how He maintains His justice for His glory's sake.

For example, He condemns those who take His Name in vain (Ex. 20:7) ... and those who desecrate His day face His wrath (Ex. 31:14). Those who pervert the relationship He established in the Garden of Eden between male and female, He will give over to their vile affections, as His judgment (Rom. 1:26ff.). ... He resents the insults and the indignities of men and women who rebel against Him ... And because He is God, He will deal with it! He does not ignore sin.

And for those who don't like His authority on earth, they won't be able to enjoy it in eternity. Those who destroy His laws, and ridicule His Word ... He will remove, for He is the jealous God ... He is absolutely jealous for His honour ... and He demands adoration and glory from every creature ... and the proof of adoration and glory is that they receive Him, - His ways and His purposes, - *fully*. ... If not, He won't have anything to do with them. Here is how explains the layout in the shortest psalm, **Ps. 117:1** *O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.* <sup>2</sup> *For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.* ... That's all it says ... but *what a command!*

If you want to know God's blessing, obey God! If you don't obey God, don't expect to know His blessing! ... You can't expect to live your life with no thought of Him and then one day expect Him to take you to Heaven ... for it won't happen! People who have no time for Him in this life, how can they expect *Him* to have time for *them* in the next life?!

But what it comes down to is this ... What God commands, He expects to receive because that is the standard of worship He requires. ... Nothing less! He expects the highest ... even though it seems as if His standards are unattainable! It did not hinder Moses from telling his people what they needed to hear, **Dt. 4:24** *the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God ... and to*

violate His desire is to provoke His judgment. ... That is God's justice! That is how He perceives we ought to live ... He is the God of justice ... justice for which He has legislated, according to His holiness ... and He tolerates no rivals and no rebels! ... And the God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament for here is how Jesus is portrayed, **Jude 14** Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, **15** To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. ...

And He is jealous for His people, Joel announces, **Joel 2:18** Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people. **19** Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen ... **21** Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things.

He is also jealous for the Gospel, **Gal. 1:8** But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. **9** As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. In fact, He is jealous for His people, and He is jealous for the Gospel, and He is also jealous for His Son ... and He judges those who preach another means of salvation which belittles what He has done.

It is a theme that is not mentioned often, - the jealousy of God, - but it is a theme high on His agenda, **II Thess. 1:8** In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: **9** Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; **10** When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. ... He is a God of uncompromising and inflexible justice.

Another aspect of His character is that He is the God of irresistible and overwhelming power, **Nahum 1:3** the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of his feet. Whenever there is a storm, a tornado, or a hurricane ... God controls it ... He is behind it, and that means He is more powerful than anything we could imagine! **Ps. 19:1** The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork ... All the scientists who deny Him, they better beware! They shake their fists in His face and reject His Word that requires them to believe *He* created the world and the galaxies near and far ... Their consistent rebellion places them in eternal

danger! Neither does He consider it a small thing for a professing believer to hold the God-denying theories such scientists espouse.

In the Bible God uses the rains, the earthquakes, the floods, the sun, the moon ... God uses His creation ... the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of his feet. ... On the Sea of Galilee His Son rebuked the waves and they calmed, and the winds stopped! ... Read the judgments in the Book of Revelation and you will see there also the inexorable power of God, for example, **Rev. 8:8** And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood ... **16:20** And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. **21** And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, *every stone* about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

When Jesus comes in judgment He will be coming in the clouds ... How can that be? Won't He fall through them? No, for He has power over them! As He stood before the Sanhedrin, **Mk. 14:61** the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? **62** And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. ... He is coming in glory! His power is irresistible, and all His creation works according to His bidding ... and will render His second coming as the greatest event!

That is how we know that when He sets out to save a soul, that soul will be saved. The sinner's sin is no match for His work of redemption. When He prophesies what will happen prior to the second advent of His Son, it will surely happen ... and it will happen the way He described it! He is the God of irresistible power, and all creation is shouting it with the loudest 'Amen'! And that is also why He will have no mercy upon those to whom His work is so obvious, **Rom. 1:19** Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. **20** For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse

God controls this earth ... and some day, - because they shake their fists of unbelief at Him, He is going to shake this earth and it will not recover, **II Pet. 3:1** the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up ... and that is what Nahum

alludes to also, <sup>5</sup> The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

This world is not going to last forever, - it is not indestructible. But this is our God, this is Who He is! ... No wonder v.6 asks concerning the unbeliever, Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? The answer is ... *none!* ... His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

People fool themselves when they overlook God's wrath, and the subject of His judgment. If they decided they want to believe in God, their self-deceit deludes them into thinking there is only a God of love ... a God Who will take anything that's thrown at Him, and won't respond negatively ... But, *that* is not the God of the Bible! Said He, **Heb. 12:25** See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven. ... God is going to shake this earth in His mighty wrath, - that is what the Bible says ... and it is because He will not forever ignore man's rebellion. There is coming a day that is known as the day of His wrath ... and He will inflict upon the disobedient unimaginable punishment for ... **Heb. 10:31** *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

He is the God of uncompromising justice, and of irresistible power, but Nahum shows us He is also the God of grace ... and it in no way conflicts with His justice and fearsome power, **Nahum 1:7** The LORD *is* good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him. He is the God of infinite mercy, He is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (II Peter 3:9) ... That is how good/*gracious* and overflowing with grace He is! ... He is a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him. He has a book full with the names of all the Redeemed, **Mal. 3:16** a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. There is no anxiety or faintheartedness among those who belong to Him, <sup>17</sup> And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, ... and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. There is no protection for the rebels, but there is the promise for the redeemed.

The psalmist said the goodness of God endureth continually (Ps. 52:1) ... and that is how David praised Him, **I Chron. 16:34** O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good. Even in the distress of Babylon, Jeremiah did not despair either, **Lam. 3:22** *It is of* the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail

not. <sup>23</sup> *They are* new every morning: great *is* thy faithfulness. ... Jesus Himself declared, **Mt. 5:45** he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust ... **Ps. 33:6** By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. <sup>7</sup> He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. <sup>8</sup> Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. <sup>9</sup> For he spake, and it was *done*; he commanded, and it stood fast. <sup>10</sup> The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. <sup>11</sup> The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. ... Solomon praised Him in the temple, **I Kings 8:56** Blessed *be* the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.

And Nahum tells us our God is a stronghold ... a refuge for all His people. That is how David also raised the chorus of victory, **II Sam. 22:2** The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; <sup>3</sup> The God of my rock; in him will I trust: *he is* my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. <sup>4</sup> I will call on the LORD, *who is* worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. ...

And, says Nahum, he knoweth them that trust in him. The word 'know' doesn't simply mean to 'be aware of' for it has the same sense as the word 'to love' ... and he *loveth* them that trust in him. He loves them with a love that is everlasting, and that never can be broken for His love for them began from long before the foundation of the world. ... He loved you even when there was not yet any of you to love!

That is the devoted affection, - the emotion, the passion, the tenderness, - He has for His children. That is the same commitment with which He has saved you ... that shelters you from His righteous judgment and wrath. He has worked it out that all His wrath that should have been poured upon us was poured upon His only-begotten Son instead ... and He dealt with it to the most excruciating degree, to the complete satisfaction of His Father. And therefore, we are saved through Christ alone.

But, if all this is strange to you, and you are still in fear of the Lord and His everlasting wrath, you can turn to Him in repentance from your sin ... Call upon Him to remove your guilt, and believe in Christ for salvation, and His wrath will be removed ... He will turn you from facing out into the darkness and into the light. There will be no more judgment, and no more Divine wrath



awaiting you for His Word promises, **Rom. 8:1** *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.*

So then, that is the Christian's priority, - to know God. Above and beyond everything else, that is what He intends for our journey throughout life ... it is to know Him, and to know Him more in preparation for Glory. That is the real reason He formed and created us ... for He is awaiting that great day when we shall be with Him forever.

Yes, it is our greatest privilege to be chosen to know Him, to love Him, and to be eternally loved by Him ... for that is how verse seven fits it all so neatly and so beautifully, **Nahum 1:7** *The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.*

How good is the God we adore,  
Our faithful unchangeable friend;  
His love is as great as His power,  
And knows neither measure nor end.