

## Week 4: “Yahweh & the Nations” (Nahum, Obadiah, and Jonah)

Leaning into LENT

### Dwelling in the Word

2. Prayerfully read through Nahum 1:1-8 and ask: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? 2) What does this say about what God desires to accomplish in you? 3) How could you respond to what God says in this passage?

### Beginning the Conversation

3. In the light of world events and how the Scriptures portray how all things will be brought to completion in Christ, how do you understand God’s current sovereignty over the nations? Discuss.
4. Two of the prophetic books discussed in the sermon – Nahum and Obadiah – are rather obscure, while Jonah is very well known. What did you know about Nahum and Obadiah? How do they fit into what you know about prophetic books? How are they different?

### Digging Deeper

5. Read (or skim) through the book of Nahum. How does it portray God’s sovereignty?
6. In the midst of the description of judgment on Nineveh, what passages in Nahum would perhaps be comforting for Judah, a nation that has been oppressed by Assyria? As a Christ follower is it permissible to take comfort in the judgment of others? How does the focus of redemptive history on Jesus Christ affect how we should view this judgment? (Read Proverbs 24:17-18; Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11; Matthew 5:44).
7. Compare Nahum 1:2-3 with Exodus 34:6-7, Joel 2:13-14, and Jonah 4:2. What attributes of God does Nahum emphasize in comparison with the other passages? Why do you think that is?
8. Read through Obadiah. How would you summarize its message?
9. If Edom represents the ungodly powers of this world that threaten the people of God, how does Obadiah illustrate God’s eschatological victory over all his adversaries?
10. Through Obadiah, the prophet reveals that the Edomites had mistakenly put their confidence in their impregnable homes in the mountains, as well as their alliances, wisdom, and military. These are mistaken confidences. What things do we mistakenly put our confidence in, instead of God?
11. There is a long tradition of reading Jonah, with God’s mercy and forgiveness towards Nineveh, as a counterbalance to Nahum’s judgment on Nineveh (e.g., compare Nahum 3:19 and Jonah 4:11). How do you feel about the harsh and unrelenting messages of Nahum and Obadiah? Does it help to read them alongside a book like Jonah?

### Living it Out

4. We often feel that it is appropriate to pay back those we feel have wronged us. God declares his sovereign right to execute justice in Deuteronomy 32:35: “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” How does the Apostle Paul appeal to this passage in Romans 12:17-21? While the desire for vengeance that we see in these prophets is understandable, as followers of Christ how do you feel we should approach such things?
5. Do you see parallels between your life and Jonah’s? Do you sometimes refuse to communicate God’s love and mercy to other people? Are there particular people to whom you have a difficult time communicating the good news of God’s love? Have you thought about why that is?

# Yahweh & the Nations (Nahum, Obadiah, and Jonah)

Nahum 1:1-8; Jonah 4:11

March 30, 2025  
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Leaning into **LENT**

## Yahweh & the Nations

Oracles against Foreign Nations:

- **Amos:** Damascus, Gaza (part of Philistia), Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab (1:3-2:3).
- **Zephaniah:** Philistia (Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron), Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia/Cush, and Assyria (2:4-15).
- **Zechariah:** Hadrach, Damascus, Aram, Hamath, Tyre & Sidon, Philistia (Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod) (9:1-8); and Lebanon (11:1-3).
- **Joel:** Philistia, Tyre & Sidon (3:4-8).

## Yahweh & the Nations

- **Isaiah:** Assyria (10:5-19); Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, Edom, Arabia, Tyre & Sidon (13:1-23:18); Babylon (21:1-10; 46:1-47:15).
- **Jeremiah:** Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Hazor, Elam, Babylon (46:1-51:64).
- **Ezekiel:** Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre & Sidon, Egypt (25:1-32:32).
- **Daniel:** No “oracles” per se, but does feature prophecies about the rise and fall of empires and nations.

## Yahweh & the Nations

- **Nahum:** the whole book is an oracle against Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.
- **Obadiah:** an oracle against Edom, judging them for their participation in the destruction of Jerusalem.
- **Jonah:** story of a prophet who was sent to Nineveh (the capital of Assyria).



## The Book of Nahum

“A prophecy concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite” (1:1).

- **Nineveh** was made capital of Assyria by Sennacherib around 700BC and fell to Babylon in 612BC. Most date the prophecy between its fall and the fall of Thebes in 663BC (3:8-10).
- **Nahum** – don’t know anything about him or his family except that his name means “comfort” (*nachum* נַחֻם). *His message was comfort for Judah, not Nineveh!*



## The Book of Nahum

- Superscription (1:1)
- Hymn to the Divine Warrior (1:2-8)
- The Divine Warrior will Save his People (1:9-2:2)
- The Vision of Nineveh’s Demise (2:3-13)
- Woe Oracle against Nineveh (3:1-7)
- The Inevitability of Nineveh’s Destruction (3:8-19)



## The Book of Nahum

A Message of Judgment on Nineveh

- “Yahweh is a jealous and avenging God; Yahweh takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. Yahweh takes vengeance on his foes and vents his wrath against his enemies” (1:2).
- “Nothing can heal you; your wound is fatal. All who hear the news about you clap their hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?” (3:19).



## Assyrian Atrocities

“I tore out the tongues of those whose slanderous mouths had uttered blasphemies against my god Ashur and had plotted against me, his god-fearing prince; I defeated them [completely]. The others, I smashed alive with the very same statues of protective deities with which they had smashed my own grandfather Sennacherib — now [finally] as a [belated] burial sacrifice for his soul. I fed their corpses, cut into small pieces to dogs, pigs, zibbu-birds, vultures, the birds of the sky and [also] to the fish of the ocean. After I had performed this and [thus] made quiet [again] the hearts of the great gods, my lords, I removed the corpses of those whom the pestilence had felled, whose leftovers [after] the dogs and pigs had fed on them were obstructing the streets, filling the places [of Babylon, and] of those who had lost their lives through the terrible famine” (ANET 288).

## The Book of Nahum

A Message of Comfort to Judah

- “Yahweh is good, a stronghold in a day of trouble; he protects those who take refuge in him” (1:7).
- “... No more will the wicked invade you [=Judah]; they will be completely destroyed” (1:15).
- Reminds them of Yahweh’s character and promises, and his sovereignty over the nations.

## The Book of Obadiah

“The vision of Obadiah. This is what the Lord Yahweh says about Edom...” (1).

- Obadiah means “servant of Yahweh” (עבדיה).
- Entirely concerned about Edom.
- Dated to after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC (cf. Lam 4:18-22).



## The Book of Obadiah

There was a tension-filled fraternal relationship between Israel and Edom:

- Jacob (= Israel) & Esau (= Edom) are the eponymous ancestors of the two nations (Gen 25, 27).
- Edom refused permission for the Israelites to go through land after deliverance from Egypt (Num 20:14-21).
- Animosity reached its peak when with the destruction of Jerusalem they helped plunder (Ps 137:7).

## The Book of Obadiah

“Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever. <sup>10</sup>On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. <sup>11</sup>You should not gloat over your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast so much in the day of their trouble. <sup>12</sup>You should not march through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster, nor gloat over them in their calamity in the day of their disaster, nor seize their wealth in the day of their disaster. <sup>13</sup>You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble. <sup>14</sup>Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever” (Obad 9-14).



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## The Book of Obadiah

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“For the day of Yahweh is near against all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head” (15).

- Edom is identified with “all the nations”: they represent the ungodly powers of this world which threatens the people of God (1:15-21).
- Yahweh will deal justly with Edom — and with “all the nations” on the day of Yahweh.



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## Nahum & Obadiah

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No Word of Grace

- Nahum: No grace for Nineveh!
- Obadiah: No grace for Edom!
- No grace for any evil nation at odds with Yahweh!



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## The Book of Jonah

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The story of a disobedient prophet:

- Called to go to Nineveh and proclaim Yahweh’s judgment (1:2; 3:2).
- *Eventually* Jonah goes, preaches, and the city repents! (3:5-9).
- Yahweh’s forgiveness greatly displeases Jonah (4:1).



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## The Book of Jonah

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The Conclusion

- “But Yahweh said, ‘You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight... And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?’” (4:10-11).



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## The Book of Jonah

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Jonah illustrates the principle that the oracles against foreign nations are always conditional: *if the people repent, Yahweh will relent.*

- “If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned” (Jeremiah 18:7-8).



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## Theology of the Nations

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1. Yahweh, the God of Israel, and the Creator of the cosmos, is sovereign over all the nations.
2. While Yahweh is working through his chosen people, Yahweh is also working through other peoples/nations in ways we may not always discern (cf. Amos 9:5-7).



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## Theology of the Nations

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3. The impending judgment that the oracles express are not an end in themselves, but point to an ideal future beyond the punishment.
  - For the nations, they are indirect calls to repentance (Jonah; Jeremiah 18).
  - For the Israelites, they are to comfort the oppressed and give voice to lament (Nah 1:15; Obad 18-21).



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## Theology of the Nations

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4. Things shifted when God send his Messiah, Jesus.
  - Jesus broke down the barrier between peoples (Eph 2:14-16) and ushered in this new age of redemption.
  - The believing Nations/Gentiles (*goyim* גוים = *ethnos* εθνος = the nations) have now been grafted into the people of God (Rom 11:17-24), and followers of Christ now are called to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19).



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## Invitation

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Comfort, Hope, and Grace for all Nations/Peoples:

- **Comfort** knowing that God will judge the world in justice and righteousness, and he will extend forgiveness to all who repent and turn to him.
- **Hope** knowing that God is working in this world and even invites us to join him on mission.
- **Grace** knowing that God extends grace to each of us, as well as for all peoples.