Restoration

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. We're going to be in Nahum 2, but I want to begin with the words of the prophet Isaiah in chapter 46.

He says, To whom will you liken me and make me equal and compare me that we may be alike? Those who lavish gold from the purse and weigh out silver in the scales, hire a goldsmith and he makes it into a god.
Then they fall down and worship. They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it, they set it in its place and it stands there. It cannot move from its place.
If one cries to it, it does not answer or save him from his trouble. Remember this and stand firm. Recall it to mine, you transgressors.
Remember the former things of old, for I am God and there is no other. I am God and there is none like me.
[1:11] Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will accomplish all my purpose.

This is who our God is. Declaring the end from the beginning. Speaking forth his purpose and his decree.
And able to perfectly bring to pass all that he chooses to do, saying, My counsel shall stand and he will accomplish all that he has purposed to do.
In Nahum, as we are now in chapter 2, we're reminded again of a God who declares the end from the beginning. When we read Nahum 2, we're not in a purest sense, we're not reading history.
In Nahum 2, we're reading prophecy. Now, what is prophesied absolutely historically comes to pass.
[2:28] But what makes this staggering are the words of Nahum 2 are written about four decades before they ever take place.

When you are reading in the book of Habakkuk, part of Habakkuk is current day, present tense, but part of what is described in Habakkuk is future.
That's how it is with the prophets. In many places, they are speaking of what is going to come, to pass, and at times, even speaking in the past tense of things that will come to pass because if the Lord has decreed it, it will take place.
It's that certain. So when we come to Nahum 2, you've got the Lord speaking to the people of Nineveh, speaking to the nation, but He's going to tell them what is to come.
So as we read it, it's going to read like history when in actuality, what we're reading is that which is prophetic of what will soon take place.
[3:39] Remember that when we read this short book of Nahum, there are really two words I want you to have in mind when you think of Nahum. There is condemnation and there is comfort.

Condemnation is for the wicked, for Nineveh. Comfort is for the people of God. And the question that the people of God have is simply, are we coming to an end?
So just go back with me in your mind in Old Testament history a bit. Around 650, when Nahum is writing, would have made it roughly 70 years after the Assyrians have overtaken that northern kingdom of Israel.
Well, if you're in Judah, that southern kingdom, you know what Nineveh did to the north, you have to wonder, is the same thing going to happen to us here in the south? Nineveh is the capital of the Assyrian empire and they are stronger now than ever.
But Nineveh will not survive. There's a word of condemnation for Nineveh and a word of comfort for the people of God that the Lord will protect them.

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[5:00] When we come to chapter 2, this is the Lord telling Nineveh exactly what is about to happen. There is an old video, I remember watching, I've seen it many times, where when Larry Bird played for the Boston Celtics, he goes out its last minute play, last second play out of bounds and Boston's down by a point and he tells the defender exactly where he's going to get the ball.

He just tells him, I'm going to get the ball, I'm going to get it right here, I'm going to shoot it and make it win the game. And he does. And so much in sport is about disguise or misdirection.
But if you're that good, if you're that dominant, you don't care if the defense knows what you're going to do because they can't stop you. Well, in Nahum 2, this is the Lord telling Nineveh, this is exactly what I'm going to do.
He's not disguising, he's not hiding, he's not concealing. He is telling them, get ready, this is what is coming your way. Remember, it was just about a hundred years ago when Jonah spoke to Nineveh and they repented.
God relented. Here we are a century later and they've returned to their sin. And the Lord says, as a nation, that's it.
[6:36] Verse 1, let's read it together. The scatterer has come up against you. Man the ramparts, watch the road, dress for battle, collect all your strength.

For the Lord is restoring the majesty of Jacob as the majesty of Israel. For plunderers have plundered them and ruined their branches. The shield of his mighty men is red, his soldiers are clothed and scarlet.
The chariots come with flashing metal on the day he musters them. The cypress spears are brandished. The chariots race madly through the streets.
They rush to and fro through the squares. They gleam like torches. They dart like lightning. He remembers his officers. They stumble as they go.
They hasten to the wall. The siege tower is set up. The river gates are opened. The palace melts away. Its mistress is stripped.
[7:40] She is carried off. Her slave girls lamenting, moaning like doves and beating their breasts. Verse 1, there's a call for preparation.

The scatterer has come up against you. Nahum here, this is Nahum speaking the words of God, calls the people of Nineveh to prepare for the attack. He's telegraphing it.
When I played basketball in middle school and high school, they would say you don't telegraph your pass, meaning don't let them know who you're passing to. If you're a quarterback, they'll tell you don't telegraph your pass.
You've got to look off to safety before you throw it down field so you don't throw an interception. You can't telegraph. You can't expose what you're trying to do. The Lord has no worry or concern with that.
He will tell them exactly what he's going to do. And Nineveh will be fully prepared knowing what is coming and though fully prepared, it will not be enough.
[8:48] The scatterer has come up against you. Commentators take a few different views of how they interpret this part of chapter 2. What I think is being said here myself as this is speaking of the Babylonian army in human terms.

The Babylonians are going to come and overtake the Assyrians and I think in a human sense, that's the scatterer. But ultimately the scatterer is God himself who is going to defeat the Ninevites.
This is just like in the book of Habakkuk when the Lord says to Habakkuk that he is going to bring judgment upon Judah. Now he's going to do it using the Chaldeans, the Babylonians and Habakkuk but it is absolutely the purpose and plan of God that is being carried out.
The events described in Nahum 2 will take place in 612 BC but this is four decades before that and for an example, verse 4 gives you a play by play of what's to come.
Four decades before it happens. The scatterers come up against you and here's the warning he gives to Nineveh, Nineveh, man the ramparts. Guard your ramparts.
[10:07] There's a bit of a play on words here in the original text. Man and ramparts are essentially the exact same word. One letter at the beginning making the distinction.

Man the ramparts. Set your defenses. Watch the road. Dress for battle. Literally means strengthen your loins.
Tells them get ready for the conflict. Nahum tells the warriors get your fighting gear on. Collect all your strength verse 1 says.

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In other words, he says to Nineveh, you better get ready because the attack is coming. the scatterer is coming. Set your defenses. Watch for intruders.
Dress for battle. Be ready with all your courage. It's a call for them to be prepared. Now you might think why if the Lord is going to bring judgment upon Nineveh, why tell them what he's going to do?
[11:15] because as Isaiah said I read at the very beginning, he has decreed the end from the beginning and all he has said will come to pass will accomplish his purposes.

There is no match for God. Verse 2 speaks of a decree of a promise that's given here.
He says, for the Lord is restoring the majesty of Jacob as the majesty of Israel. So the people of Nineveh are going to be ready, but they're not going to prevail.
Why? Because the Lord is restoring the majesty of Israel, of Jacob. You recall Jacob's name was changed to Israel when he wrestled with the angel in the Old Testament.
So the promise of God in the Old Testament was given to Abraham and then proceeded through. Isaac and Jacob, the Lord, fought for his people. The people flourished.
[12:19] And here is the promise of verse 2 that the Lord is restoring his people. Now that's important for them to know because what's about to happen in the decades to come is very, very dark.

after the Babylonians overtake the Assyrians in 605, Nebuchadnezzar is going to come in and he's going to surround Jerusalem in 586.
They're going to destroy the temple. They're going to take the people out into exile into Babylon and it's dark, very, very dark.
We went through the book of Lamentations Sunday nights a year or so ago and it's a dark, dark time. And yet, God has made his promise that he's not abandoning his people.
Without that promise, they would have to assume they would be destroyed because again, 70 years ago, they watched it happen to the northern kingdom of Israel.
[13:28] people. But God in his goodness and his kindness is telling them, I am working my plan, my decree. And I think for us, living today in the church age, there's a great parallel for this because the New Testament over and over and over again does tell us that the days are going to be dark.

The New Testament is clear on that. You cannot read your Bible and miss this. It's very evident that in the days leading up to the return of Christ, things are going to get very, very dark.
But just like in the book of Nahum, so it's true for us as the church, as the people of God. There is both condemnation and there is comfort. Condemnation for those who oppose the Lord and comfort for his church because in the end, the church triumphs.
And you need to know that as you go through the dark days that inevitably are here. when you read in the gospels and when you read in the epistles about in the book of Revelation, the things that must take place, has God abandoned his church when those events unfold?
He has not. The days are dark, but the people are not abandoned. God is accomplishing his purpose.
[14:52] Then what you and I must know, believe, and remember is that even in the darkest of seasons, God has not abandoned his people.

He's faithful. In Nahum, we see that as he tells them, I'm going to restore.
I'm restoring you. You turn one page over to the book of Habakkuk and you've got the promised destruction that's going to be coming and that destruction comes and Habakkuk himself speaks of how hard it is to hear this prophecy of what's going to take place because of how dark it's going to be.
And yet, even in that dark time of judgment, it is not God's abandonment. God is still protecting his people and accomplishing his purposes.
Now, what you need to take from that is the assurance that in the Old Testament when God gave his promise and gave his prophetic voice, it came to pass.
[16:01] Both the event and his hand of protection. In the same way today in our life, as you read the New Testament and look at the events of the world, understand that just just as it was true in the Old Testament, the same God today has made promises and will bring them to pass.

So as you read the Old Testament here in the prophets, the more history you understand, the more detail we can grasp, the more our confidence in the promises of God should grow and our faith becomes stronger and deeper because the same God who made the promises in Nahum 2 is the same God who has promised us that he will never leave us or forsake us.

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He's with us. The decree of promise given here in verse 2 taking place for decades before it would come to pass spoken of with complete assurance.
The Lord is restoring the majesty of Jacob as the majesty of Israel. Going on in verse 2, for plunderers have plundered them and ruined their branches.
The plunderers, the Assyrians, devastated the land in Israel in 722 in that northern kingdom. But here in verse 2, Nahum gives the promise to the Jewish people that the land will be restored and in the end the people of God will flourish.
[17:32] So what's going to happen to Nineveh representing the Assyrians? They were plunderers. They will be plundered. They emptied the land. They themselves will be emptied.

And so it is for all even today who oppose the Lord. Those who would seek to oppose themselves will be completely undone by the power of God and judgment.
Verses 3 to 5, we find a sense of protection. This reads as a play by play describing what is to come.
The shield of his mighty men is red. His soldiers are clothed in scarlet. Here Nahum describes this clash that's coming between the Assyrians and the Babylonians.
The Assyrians had these red shields that were overlaid with copper. It would reflect the sun. It was part of a strategy and a tactic.
[18:36] Soldiers are arrayed in scarlet, meaning they are organized. They are intimidating. They have a strong presence and yet it will not matter.

They will be defeated. The chariots come with flashing metal on the day he musters them and the cypress spears are brandished.
They have these chariots that would have been fortified with metal. Their spears are sharpened, meaning they're ready to defend and they're ready to attack. Verse 4, the play by play continues. The chariots race madly through the streets. They rush to and fro through the squares. They gleam like torches. They dart like lightning. So these armored chariots that are there organized, ready to be put to work, the attack begins and they're going to be racing all throughout the city to fight off the attack.
And as this unfolds in history about four decades later, it may seem if somebody had read the prophecy of Nahum for a moment, it may seem like why did God tip his hand what he was going to do?
[19:46] Why didn't he let this be a surprise attack? Because when the enemies come to fight against the Assyrians, the people of Nineveh represents them, Nineveh is going to be organized.

Their soldiers are dressed for battle. Their spears are sharp. Their chariots are ready. It will be no matter because our God who decrees the end from the beginning accomplishes all he says he will do.
Verse 5, he remembers his officers. They stumble as they go. They hasten to the wall. The siege tower is set up. So the soldiers and the people are running to try to defend the city and they stumble as they try to fight.
The people here in Nahum 2 are pictured as organized, dressed for battle, chariots ready to go, soldiers fortifying their defenses and Nineveh look strong and as though they cannot be defeated.
In verse 6 comes the prophecy of Nineveh being plundered. The river gates are opened and the palace melts away.
[21:07] They look like they're ready for battle. They're dressed. They've got their armor. They've got their weapons.

They've got their chariots. They've got their defenses set. And the play-by-play says in verse 6, here's what happens next.
The river gates are opened. Nineveh was located near three rivers. The rivers were a very important part of Nineveh because the rivers themselves provided beauty.
It made Nineveh a great place. It had water for drinking. It had water for nourishment. The three rivers allowed them to be able to water their gardens, to water their city.
It was able to have this beautiful place. The rivers also served as a natural safety, a natural defense against those who would ever want to try to come and attack them.
[22:17] The rivers that surrounded Nineveh were a sense of beauty, but also a sense of pride. It made them feel impenetrable. And that which they took pride in will become their undoing as the river gates are opened.

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The dams break. We don't know for sure. It's possible the Babylonians may have been the source of that. What we do know is this water that once was controlled and a source of strength now becomes a source of flood and destruction.
And the effects are unleashed upon the city, including, it says, the palace that was known to be spectacular and beautiful that now melts away.
The palace, we know, was filled with beautiful artwork, and now it has been flooded and destroyed, taken to the ground by the Babylonian army.
Verse 7, its mistress is stripped. She is carried off for slave girls lamenting, moaning like doves and beating their breasts. The city is stripped of its strength and its power.
[23:46] They'll be carried off into exile. The inhabitants are going to be defeated. Many of them killed. The ones who survived, taken away as captives.

Those who are left behind, moaning and grieving. Many of the people killed in the battle. Others killed in the flood. Others carried off into captivity.
And those who remain are pictured here as beating their breasts and crying and wailing and moaning and lamenting as this city that as Nahum records this, looks like they could never be defeated are now pictured in utter ruin.
It reads like history. It does become history. But it's recorded as prophecy. This is recorded before the events take place.
Now there is something I want to point out to you and this is not original to me. This is something that I give credit to another who has recognized this and commented on that I think is very helpful.
[25:08] We know that Jonah is essentially the first part and the sequel is Nahum. Jonah goes to Nineveh about a hundred years before Nahum.

There's repentance when Nahum comes about a century later. They're back in complete rejection and ruin. And I think there's a purposeful play here in verse 7 where it says they are moaning like doves.
Jonah who prophesied to Nineveh a century ago Jonah's name means dove.
When the dove went to Nineveh the people repented. God sent Jonah to Nineveh to provide hope and repentance and their repentance brought them comfort.
Well comfort is the exact meaning of the word Nahum. When Jonah went to Nineveh the people repented and now a century later the people reject and four decades later from this they will be ruined defeated and Nahum says they will be moaning like doves.
[26:47] Moaning like Jonah. A reminder of the mercy of God who sent the spokesman for God to their people.

A revival that did not last. He sent Nahum to speak a word of coming judgment against Nineveh and they mourn like doves and when you read that you can't help but be reminded of the story of Jonah. This I believe is the Lord saying to the people of Nineveh I gave you grace grace I showed you mercy I sent a preacher I gave you warning his name essentially was dove and in grace I gave you comfort Nahum and you rejected and you returned to your wicked ways and now the God you have rejected will be the God who you face and I have decreed the end from the beginning and I have told you play by play what's going to happen and you can't stop it.
It's been said that either the sinner repents in light of God's warning and receives his grace or the sinner ignores God's warning and receives his wrath.
Nineveh received his grace and because the people rejected him after that they will now receive his wrath. Turn with me as we close to the book of Romans chapter 2.
[28:52] Romans chapter 2. Look with me in verse 3.

Do you suppose O man you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself that you will escape the judgment of God or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance patience but because because of your heart and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed he will render to each one according to his works this is the character of God who was gracious and patient and merciful to Nineveh and then judged them and Paul says here under the inspiration of the
Holy Spirit do you presume that the riches of his kindness and his forbearance and his patience are going to last forever don't you know that you are accountable to God for what he has offered to you it would be a tragic mistake for us tonight to consider what happened to Nineveh in 612 BC and

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separate it from the reality the same God who brought them down is the same God who will verse 6 render to each one according to his works our God is gracious and even in Nineveh you see the example of that Nineveh was a wicked people the Assyrians were vile gruesome people and yet even to them
God sent a dove and now you'll be moaning like a dove and for the world today he has sent them a savior and for those who reject him they will meet him as their judge this is why for us we want to be focused on continually speaking and declaring the gospel as well as praying for people to be saved I hope you'll take away with me even tonight the biblical responsibility we have to pray for the salvation of those who need to know Jesus they will meet him if not as savior most assuredly as their judge but God sent to Nineveh a dove before they moan like a dove and God today sends those who will declare the gospel the promise of a savior before people will stand before him as their judge be the spokesman for God be the prayer intercessor for those who need to know the truth we'll lead the in God's hands we'll leave the unanswered questions we'll trust in his character but for us let us speak the truth and pray for the salvation of those who need to come to know the truth lest they one day stand before the
`[33:33]` Lord as their judge Lord we thank you tonight for the word you have given to us words recorded so long ago that could pass by us as things too ancient to matter and yet we see I pray tonight how meaningful these words are as we learn more of your character and your nature and even of your kindness kindness and as your word says it is your kindness that leads us to repentance may we seek Lord to speak of the hope of your son and to pray for those who need to repent while it is still time we pray you would use us even this week to accomplish those purposes In the name of your son we pray!

Amen! God bless! You're dismissed! God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God fathers God God God God God God God God God God God God

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