

Nineveh Falls to the Armies of the Medes and Babylonians

Nahum 2

Nahum 2 - *“He who scatters has come up before your face. Man the fort! Watch the road!*

Strengthen your flanks! Fortify your power mightily. ² For the Lord will restore the excellence of Jacob like the excellence of Israel, for the emptiers have emptied them out and ruined their vine branches.

³ The shields of his mighty men are made red; the valiant men are in scarlet. The chariots come with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the spears are brandished. ⁴ The chariots rage in the streets. They jostle one another in the broad roads. They seem like torches; they run like lightning.

⁵ He remembers his nobles; they stumble in their walk they make haste to her walls, and the defense is prepared.

⁶ The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved.

⁷ It is decreed: she shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up; and her maidservants shall lead her as with the voice of doves, beating their breasts.

⁸ Though Nineveh of old was like a pool of water, now they flee away. “Halt! Halt!” they cry; but no one turns back. ⁹ Take spoil of silver! Take spoil of gold! There is no end of treasure, or wealth of every desirable prize.

¹⁰ She is empty, desolate, and waste! The heart melts, and the knees shake; much pain is in every side, and all their faces are drained of color.

¹¹ Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion walked, the lioness and lion’s cub, and no one made them afraid? ¹² The lion tore in pieces enough for his cubs, killed for his lionesses, filled his caves with prey, and his dens with flesh.

¹³ “Behold, I am against you,” says the Lord of hosts, “I will burn your chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions; I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall be heard no more.”

Background Notes

The prophecy of Nahum could be entitled “To Nineveh from Nahum.” Nineveh was a great city, the capital of the Assyrian Empire. Assyria is known as one of the most cruel of the ancient empires. It is well documented that in warfare, the Assyrians would impale their living victims on sharp poles, leaving them to die a hideous death. They literally skinned or filleted their prisoners alive. In 722 BC the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. In 701 BC they besieged Jerusalem, after conquering a number of the surrounding towns in Judah - but God intervened and didn’t allow Jerusalem to be conquered.

However, now the time for Nineveh’s destruction had come. God had delayed His judgment on this pagan city because the citizens had previously repented of their sinful ways when Jonah preached there - over 150 years before Nahum’s

time. But Nineveh had gone back to her cruel and pagan ways, and God would spare Nineveh no longer. Thus the theme of the prophecy of Nahum is “the doom of Nineveh.”

Nahum was a Hebrew prophet from Elkosh: *“The burden against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite”* (1:1). Where was Elkosh? We don’t know! One view is that it was the town of Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee, because Capernaum (*Kfar Nahum*) means “the city of Nahum.” But then again, the name “Nahum” means comfort or consolation. So Capernaum may have been the “city of comfort,” and not necessarily the home of the prophet Nahum.

We know that Nahum wrote his prophecy from the southern kingdom of Judah, because the northern kingdom of Israel (which included Galilee and Capernaum) had already fallen to the Assyrians in 722 BC. So Elkosh may have been somewhere in Judah. Apart from what is revealed in the book of Nahum, we know nothing about the prophet Nahum.

Although Nahum’s prophecy of judgment was directed at Nineveh, the pagan Assyrian city, it was certainly a warning and wake-up call to the people of the kingdom of Judah, who had also departed from the Lord. In fact, the prophecy of Nahum should be a warning and wake-up call to any city or nation that has departed from God’s standards, including our own nation.

Doctrinal Points

1. The splendor of Nineveh would be removed.

In this vivid description of the fall of Nineveh, we can almost see and hear the battle taking place! The call goes out to defend the city (v1). The armies of the Medes and the Babylonians are attacking the city. Man the fort! Watch the road! Strengthen your flanks! Fortify your power!

The shields of the Medes and Babylonians were covered with copper or dyed leather and looked red (v3). Their military tunics were scarlet, in contrast with the Assyrian defenders of Nineveh who dressed in blue. Spears were often fastened to the axles of the racing chariots to increase their destructive force.

Verse 5 indicates that the Assyrians would try to defend their great city, but it would be to no avail. The Tigris River would overflow its banks and flood the city, including the palace (v6). The gates mentioned are probably protective floodgates that the Medes and the Babylonians opened to further flood the city of Nineveh.

Verse 7 says that the fall of Nineveh was “decreed.” Who decreed it? Who pronounced its doom? God decreed it! And no amount of defense can save a city that God has decreed for judgment – not then, and not today.

In verses 8-10 the capitulation of Nineveh was predicted. Her defenders will jump ship and flee, and no one will be able to stop them: *“Halt! Halt!” they cry! But no one turns back” (v8).*

Then Nineveh’s great treasure will be looted: *“Take spoil of silver! Take spoil of gold! There is no end of treasure, or wealth of every desirable prize” (v9).*

Nineveh is empty, desolate, and waste (v10). Nineveh was so desolated that the location of its ruins was lost and unknown for centuries!

Archaeology has confirmed the description given in verses 11-13. The emblem of the lion was very important to the Assyrians, just as the emblem of the eagle is to our country. Many sculptured lions have been found in the ruins of Assyrian cities. Assyria had been like a proud lion, tearing the nations apart. But the Assyrian lion would roar no longer. Now she herself would be cut off and devoured. Furthermore, she would be burned by fire (v13), a fact also confirmed by archaeology. The splendor of Nineveh would be removed.

2. The splendor of Israel will be restored.

“For the Lord will restore the excellence of Jacob like the excellence of Israel” (v2).

This is an interruption in the description of the attack on Nineveh. It looks forward to the future when the Lord will return to earth. Then the tables will be turned. Once, Assyria possessed the splendor and glory - but the splendor of Nineveh would be removed, and the splendor and glory of Israel will be restored.

When will this be? This prophecy will not be fully realized until the Lord returns and sets up His future kingdom here on his earth. At that time, there will be a “godly remnant” in Israel, and they will be reestablished in the land of Israel. Then the glory and splendor of Israel will be restored. It will be greater than it ever was in the past, including in the time of the great King Solomon, because the Lord will be here and He will be the Great King!

But notice - verse 2 is not a prophecy about the present Church (as some teach). No, the Church is **not** the New Israel. **Israel is Israel!** The Old Testament prophecies about Israel that have not **yet** been fulfilled **will be fulfilled – literally - in the future.** The splendor of Israel will be restored.

Recent history has witnessed the return of the secular state of Israel, almost 2000 years after Jerusalem was destroyed. However, the splendor and glory of Israel will only be restored when the nation turns back to the Lord. Romans 11 assures us that this will take place in the future. The splendor of Israel will be restored.

Practical Applications

1. Don't pull prophecy out of its context!

Look back once again at verse 4: *"The chariots rage in the streets. They jostle one another in the broad roads. They seem like torches; they run like lightning."*

This is not an Old Testament prophecy predicting the modern automobile. That sounds silly, but believe it or not, some folks have actually interpreted this verse this way! *That's pulling scripture way out of context!* Even prophecy must be seen in context. And the context here has to do with the predicted fall of Nineveh - not the invention of modern transportation! So don't pull prophecy out of its context!

2. Remember - God's "I am against you" has a corollary truth.

A corollary is something that naturally follows. Verse 13 says, *"Behold, I am against you," says the Lord of hosts.* This was God's word against Nineveh, but it can be applied to any nation or city or person who is an enemy of God.

If God says, *"I am against you,"* nothing can help you. But God's "I am against you" has a corollary truth. Romans 8:31 says, *"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"*

That's the corollary truth. It naturally follows, that if God is against those who are opposed to Him, then He is for those who love Him! And therefore no one can be against those who love Him!

If we turn to the Lord and trust in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, then we are on God's side. And if God is for us, who can be against us?

Remember - God's *"I am against you"* has a wonderful corollary truth!