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Nahum Overview



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

In this overview by Steve Gregg, the book of Nahum is explored, highlighting its unique perspective as a prophecy against the pagan nation of Assyria and the city of Nineveh. The prophecy predicts Nineveh's fall and the use of vivid language to describe the upcoming invasion. Despite the use of strong language, the book emphasizes that God is good and slow to anger, and warns of the consequences of plotting against Him. Ultimately, Nahum's prophecy serves as a message of doom and judgment against Nineveh, a city compared to a harlot due to its impurity and disgusting behavior.

Transcript

All right, tonight we're going to be looking at the book of Nahum, which is not a very commonly read book. It's, of course, one of the shorter, minor prophets. And I think, first of all, the prophetic books in the Old Testament are the books most seldom read by Christians.

You know, we can almost narrow it down. We can say the Old Testament is more seldom read than the New Testament by Christians. In the Old Testament, the prophetic books are the least read, I believe, although everyone has favorite passages in the prophets.

And yet, to read through a book like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, these big books, or even the smaller prophets, it's, they present difficulties to a modern reader. Many times we aren't familiar with the things they're predicting and how they were fulfilled. Many times we're not even familiar with the names of the countries that are mentioned in them.

We're not familiar with the Hebrew poetry in which they're written, which is a challenge. I always found it challenging to even understand English poetry. And then when you have Hebrew poetry, which has different forms of speech and so forth, there's more challenges.

I just think that many people have not read the prophets through. But of the prophets, I think the minor prophets perhaps are even the least read. And of the minor prophets, Nahum is not one of the most frequently read.

It might be the least also, maybe not. But it's certainly not a familiar book to most Christians. And it is a different kind of book because it's not written to the Jewish people.

There's a few of the minor prophets that are not written to the Jewish people or to Israel. Jonah, for example, was written against Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. So was this book.

And Obadiah was written against Edom. So these are, you know, somewhat unusual among the prophetic books because the prophets usually speak to Israel or to Judah about the things that God has complaints toward them about and calling them to repentance. And then also predicting things, usually blessings that he has in mind for them in the long run.

But these books, Jonah, Nahum, and Obadiah are books that are not written to the Jews at all. Obadiah, like I said, is written against a pagan nation. We've already studied it together.

And that's Edom. Now, Jonah and Nahum are both addressed to the same nation, the nation of Assyria and its capital city Nineveh. And you can see that Nahum is addressed to Nineveh or it's about Nineveh because it says in chapter two in verse eight, though Nineveh of old was like a pool of water, they now flee away.

And in chapter three, in verse seven, it says, it should come to pass that all who look upon you will flee from you and say Nineveh is laid waste. Who will be on her? And over in chapter three in verse 18, it says, your shepherd slumber, O king of Assyria. Now, the king of Assyria would be dwelling in Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria.

Now, we've studied Jonah before, and Jonah was sent to Nineveh at a time when Nineveh was 40 days away from its destruction. His message was 40 days and Nineveh will perish. But the people of Nineveh heeded his prophesying.

The king all the way down to the peasants all turned and repented. And God saw that and he had mercy on them and he spared them. So they weren't wiped out for 40 days or even 40 years.

It was closer to 100 years before they were wiped out. Now, Nahum then is sent to the same people are addressing the same people. This time, Nineveh will be destroyed.

Now, probably it's been two or three generations since Jonah. And it doesn't usually take more than a generation for a revival to die down or, you know, for people to trip back into their old ways. So it shouldn't be surprising that even if the whole nation repented or the whole capital city repented in the days of Jonah, that three generations later, it has reverted back to its old pagan ways.

Remember, the Assyrians were pagans. They didn't know Yahweh. They didn't know the God of Israel.

They didn't have the law of God. They didn't have the standards of conduct that were revealed to Israel. And therefore, they were cruel and violent and idolatrous and immoral.

And God, of course, all all the pagan nations were that. And God tolerated pagan nations despite those things for the most part. But Assyria was different in that it had become a very aggressive superpower and had pretty much afflicted and conquered most of the nations around it and brought them under tribute.

And it did so through very cruel forms of warfare, very violent, very painful things they did to people. They didn't just want to kill people or conquer them. They wanted to torture them.

They wanted to make you know, they wanted to make them hurt and be terrified. And people were terrified if they heard the Assyrians were coming against them as a terrifying prospect. And that's why Jonah, when he was told to go and prophesy against it, he didn't want to.

First of all, he didn't have a popular message. Perhaps he was afraid that they would do him harm. But more likely, he was afraid that they'd repent.

And that God wouldn't wipe them out. Now, Jonah was from the northern kingdom of Israel and the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians. When Samaria fell in 722 BC, this prophecy is possibly as much as, I don't know, over 100 years after the fall of Samaria to Nineveh, to Assyria.

And so Assyria was still a power, but they weren't a threat to Israel specifically anymore. The northern kingdom had already fallen. Assyria had come against Judah later in the 8th century.

And this book was written in the late 7th century BC. So Assyria had attacked Jerusalem and had wiped out lots of the villages of Judah that belonged to the territory of Jerusalem. But God had spared Jerusalem and had driven the Assyrians back.

So now the Assyrians weren't really a threat to Israel or Judah at this point in time. And it seems that God is just saying, well, you've had your career of terror and of destruction and of greed and of warfare. And now it's time for you to experience your judgment.

Now, Assyria fell to the confederate armies of Babylon and the Medes. What's interesting is about 70 years later, Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians. The Medes grouped up with the Persians to conquer Babylon some generations later.

At this point, the Medes were in league with Babylon, and they fought against Assyria. And in 612 BC, at the Battle of Carchemish, the Assyrians lost basically their ascendancy in a battle against Nebuchadnezzar. And so they fell.

And the city of Nineveh, of course, was not there on the battlefield, but it fell also. It was besieged for about two years. And then a part of the river washed away some of the foundations under the wall, and the wall collapsed.

And then the capital city fell. Now, this was probably prophesied just probably just a short time before this. We don't know the exact time that this was prophesied, but we know that it's within a certain window.

It was obviously before 612 BC because it was before the fall of Assyria. It's predicting its fall. And it was also after 663 BC because there is mention in chapter 3 and verse 8 of a city that is there in chapter 3 and verse 8. It is called Noamun, but Noamun is the old name for Thebes in Egypt.

And it talks about how Thebes had fallen. And he asked Nineveh, are you any better than they were? They fell. You're going to fall too.

But since Thebes fell in 663 BC, we know that it was in the past when this prophet wrote because he looked back at it at the fall of Thebes. So it was after the fall of Thebes, but before the fall of Assyria, and there's about a 50 year period during that time from 663 to 612 BC. And sometime in that 50 years, this prophecy was given.

Now, that would mean it either happened during the reign of Manasseh, who was Hezekiah's son. Hezekiah was king in Judah when Samaria in the north fell to the Assyrians. But his son Manasseh was the worst king of all, the worst king that Judah ever had.

And he reigned very long. I believe it was over 50 years as I recall. And then when he died, his sons weren't much better, the next king.

And then Josiah came along. Josiah was a good king. And Josiah was a boy when he became king of Judah, but he, in his adult life, set about to reform the nation, get rid of the idolatry that his father and grandfather had instituted and start following the law of Moses again.

So there's something of a revival in Judah during the time of Josiah. Now, this prophet either wrote during the time of Manasseh, which was the worst of the kings, or during the probably reign of Josiah, who was one of the best. Since it doesn't really matter since his prophecy is not against Judah.

It's against a foreign country. But trying to pinpoint when it was written, the clues we have would put it somewhere in that space between the reign of Manasseh and the reign of Josiah. That would mean that Nahum was contemporary with some other prophets we know, including Jeremiah and Zephaniah, possibly Habakkuk also.

They all were kind of during the same period of time. There's really the last 50 years or

so of Jerusalem's survival. Jerusalem fell in 586 BC.

And for 50 years before that, we have Jeremiah prophesying and some of these other minor prophets. Now, when you read the book of Jeremiah, it doesn't sound like there's many people but him and his friend Baruch. He and his scribe Baruch are like the only righteous ones around.

But we now know because of these minor prophets, there were a few guys who were loyal to Yahweh. They didn't write very large books, but they obviously were in Jerusalem and contemporary with Jeremiah. So there must have been more of the faithful remnant in Jeremiah's time than the impression you'd get reading the book of Jeremiah itself.

Now, let me say some things about Nahum himself. Nothing is known of him really, except that there is a Nahum listed in the genealogy of Mary in Luke 3, verse 25. There's no reason necessarily to believe this is the same Nahum.

The word was not an unusual one. It's a word that's related to the same root as the word Nehemiah. And there's more than one Nehemiah in the Bible.

So Nehemiah, Nahum, basically would be probably not very uncommon names. And there could easily be more than one. This Nahum, the prophet, could have been in the genealogy of Mary.

But we have no confirmation that it's the same Nehemiah mentioned in Luke 3. Now, of course, some people would not say that Luke 3 is the genealogy of Mary. It's ambiguous. And some people think it's an alternative genealogy of Joseph.

It's different than the genealogy of Joseph in Matthew chapter 1. But some think that both of them are supposed to be of Joseph. My view, having considered the various views that are available and certainly the evidence of Scripture, is that we probably do have Mary's genealogy in Luke chapter 3. And therefore, this Nahum could have been an ancestor of Mary. That's one of those could-bes that we really will never know if it is so.

His name means comfort. And we know where he's from. That's about all we know about him personally.

He's from Elkosh. He's an Elkoshite, it says in chapter 1, verse 1, which means he's from a city called Elkosh. There's different theories about where Elkosh was.

But there's no certain knowledge of where it was. And therefore, we can't really speculate too much. Interestingly, the name Capernaum, which you'll recognize from the New Testament, means the city of Nahum.

Capernaum means city of Nahum. Now, Capernaum is up in Galilee, where Jesus did most of his ministry. In fact, Capernaum was his headquarters for outreach most of the

time in his ministry in Galilee.

But it's not clear whether the name Capernaum means it's the city of this Nahum. Because at the time of this Nahum, there really wasn't much in the north. Up in Galilee, that region had been conquered by the Babylonians and depopulated, for the most part, decades earlier.

So we don't know if he was from that area. It seems more likely that he's from Judah. There do seem to be some indicators that he may have been from Judah.

There are a few points in it in which he does sound like he's writing at least to Judah or saying comforting things to Judah, although the prophecy is generally a denunciation of Nineveh. So no one knows exactly where Elkosh was. No one knows exactly anything about the man Nahum, except he left this book for posterity.

Now, when we read these prophecies that are addressed to faraway nations, we probably wonder—I know I do, and maybe you do too— did this prophecy actually go to Nineveh? Did Nahum actually make a trip to Nineveh and deliver this? We find that Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel, in their large books, all have blocks of chapters that are addressed to foreign nations. Isaiah 13-23 are all prophecies against foreign nations. The last several chapters of Jeremiah are mostly prophecies against several nations.

They'd be against Babylon, against Edom, against Moab, against the Philistines, against Assyria, against Ammon, and some other places. But it's not clear whether these prophets actually made trips to those locations. If they did, people like Jeremiah and others would have to really be traveling a lot.

You didn't get on an airplane back then. It'd take months to get from some of these places to other places on foot. So, I don't know, it seems almost unlikely that these prophets actually delivered their prophecies against these pagan nations in the presence of the pagans in their own nations.

However, we do know that Jonah was geographically sent to Nineveh and he delivered his message verbally there. So, it's not unthinkable that Nahum may have done the same. But we don't have to believe that because, again, I suppose it's possible the letter could have been sent.

It could be that they wrote their prophecies out and had them carried by whatever postal means were available to the kings of those lands to read. They wouldn't have to personally go there themselves. It's also entirely possible, and sometimes I get the impression that this is the case, that when these prophets wrote their denunciations of pagan nations, they wrote them really for the ears of the Israelites.

It's like saying, this is what God would say to these people. This is God's message to Babylon. This is his message to Nineveh.

This is his message to the Edomites. And it was really for the Israelites to hear, for them to know what God is thinking and saying and threatening to their enemies. It may be that these nations never heard these prophecies at all.

We really don't know. So, we can't answer that. But as we're reading the prophecy, realize that it's addressed to a nation very, very far away from where Nahum lived.

But whether he made the actual journey to deliver the message or mailed it or did something else to get, or didn't even, or just did it for the ears of the Israelites as an encouragement to them, we don't know. Well, let's look at the book. It begins, The Burden Against Nineveh.

The book of the vision of Nahum, the El-Kishite. The word burden in modern translation probably says the oracle. Because I guess it's assumed that modern people would know what the word oracle means more than burden.

Although I'm not sure that many modern people know the word oracle either. An oracle, of course, is just a prophetic utterance. But the prophets often were said to deliver the burden.

In fact, the whole section, there's a whole section of Isaiah I mentioned earlier, chapters 13 through 23, where it's full of the burden of the Lord against Babylon. The burden against this country, the burden against that country. And it's like when God gives the prophet an oracle of destruction, it's a heavy word.

It's a burdensome thing to the prophet to bear it and to speak it. I mean, think of how difficult it is for you or me to go up to someone we know and to give them a severe criticism. I mean, maybe some people like to do that, but most of us would prefer not to have to do that.

We'd shy away from it. It's a heavy thing to think I'm going to have to talk to them. If you're ever involved, for example, in church discipline, if you're maybe in a leadership group in the church and you have to go with others and confront someone who's a friend and a brother about something they have to repent of, you kind of dread it.

You know it's got to be done, but you dread it. I mean, to bring bad news like this even to a friend is difficult, maybe more difficult than to an enemy. I'm not sure.

But it's a burdensome word that these prophets are asked to give. It's not going to be a popular thing. And apparently it's not something that's easy for them to do.

It's like a weight upon them. But it's a prophetic word. He says against Nineveh.

And it says in verse two, God is jealous and the Lord avenges. The Lord avenges and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries and he reserves wrath for his

enemies.

The Lord is slow to anger and great in power and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord has his way in the whirlwind and in the storm and clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry.

He dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither and the flower of Lebanon wilts. The mountains quake before him.

The hills melt and the earth he is at his presence. Yes, the world and all who dwell in it. Now, we see immediately that we're reading poetry here.

If you don't have the King James Version, it should show that it's poetry. By the way, the lines are set. They're set in poetic verse with some lines indented and others not indented.

Modern translators have done this to let you know this is a poetic section. Not everything in the Bible is written in poetry, but lots of the Bible is. Certainly, the Psalms, the Proverbs, Job, and most of the prophets wrote in poetry, which means that they were not only people who were gifted with the gift of prophecy, but they were also literary people.

They were also poets. I mean, I could not write. I could not give a sermon in poetry because I don't have poetic gifts at all.

I can't even write a decent limerick, much less write a whole book in poetry. But these prophets were men of unusual literary skill as well. Now, Hebrew poetry is characterized by, as we know, repetition.

We see that immediately in verse 2, how he repeats himself. God is jealous, the Lord avenges, the Lord avenges and is furious. The only change there is that jealous is switched for furious, which is not too different in meaning.

And that's typical poetic repetition in the Old Testament prophets. Also, we see that there's tremendous hyperbole. Hyperbole would be like, you know, God melts the mountains like wax.

He dries up the seas. He dries up the rivers. He shakes the earth and the islands dissolve and so forth.

I mean, not all those things are said in this passage, but some of them are. And that's the kind of thing that simply means God is all powerful. God has his way.

In many cases, it may even be referring to the fact that God does literally control the elements and the weather. Although he does, we know he does. But a lot of times the reference to such things is that really talk about how God shakes up the geopolitical world.

The collapse of, you know, the moving of mountains, the darkening of the sun and the moon and the stars are frequently referenced in the prophets. When they're talking about the collapse of a major political empire, in this case, Nineveh. And so he talks about how he dries up the rivers, that he rebukes the sea and makes it dry.

Those kinds of things. Very typical of some of the ways that the prophets often speak of these things. In fact, just to give another example, Micah, the book just before this one, Micah, chapter one, verse three, says, behold, the Lord is coming out of his place.

He will come down and tread the high places of the earth. The mountains will melt under him and the valleys will split like wax before the fire, like waters poured down the steep place. All this is for the transgression of Jacob.

Now, it sounds like it's the end of the world, but it's not talking about the end of the world. It's talking about a judgment that's going to come on Israel in the prophets own time. And so we see Nahum using similar kind of language.

This time, the judgment is not going to be on Israel, but on Nineveh, as we're told in the very first verse and is mentioned several other times. Now, verse six, who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire and the rocks are thrown down by him. Now, again, hyperbole, poetic language.

This question, who can stand before his indignation, who can endure the fierceness of his wrath, is obviously rhetorical questions. Another thing common in the Hebrew prophets and poetry. But this business, who can stand, who can endure when the Lord is angry, is a thought that's repeated later on in Malachi chapter three.

And speaking of a much later time, actually speaking of John the Baptist coming and then Jesus and then the destruction of Jerusalem in 80, 70. Those that series of events happened, obviously, in the first century and in Malachi chapter three, beginning of verse one. It's the last book in the Old Testament.

So behold, I send my messenger. This is John the Baptist that speaks about and he will prepare the way before me and the Lord. That's Jesus whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.

Even the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight. Behold, he is coming, says the Lord of Hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming and who can stand when he appears? Now, this is the same kind of question that's asked in name.

Only this time he's coming. Jesus is coming to his temple. And it's not talking about him coming when he was, for example, taking a whip to drive out the money changers.

This is talking about the destruction of the temple in 80, 70 that's spoken of as Jesus

coming to destroy it. And so this is kind of commonplace. In fact, in Revelation chapter six, when the last not the last, but the sixth seal is broken.

There's all this same kind of chaotic stuff. Now, people often take this literally because they don't understand Hebrew writing. But you can see that this language in Revelation is very much like the Old Testament prophets.

And I believe Revelation in this case is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70, AD. It says in Revelation 6, 12. I looked when he opened the sixth seal and behold, there was a great earthquake and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair.

The moon became like blood. The stars of the heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by the mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man hid themselves in caves and in rocks of the mountains said to the mountains and rocks fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne from the wrath of the Lamb for the great day of his wrath has come. And who is able to stand again that rhetorical question? Who is able to stand? Who is able to endure when Jesus comes to judge Jerusalem? When is who's able to endure when God has decided to destroy Nineveh? That's what Nahum is asking. And it says in Nahum 1 verse 7. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble.

And he knows those who are who trust in him. But with an everlasting flood, he will make an utter end of its place and darkness will pursue his enemies or in some treasures, he shall pursue his enemies into darkness. But when it says that the Lord is good, this is in juxtaposition with what it says in verse 2. God is jealous.

The Lord avenges. You know, I mean, well, he's going to he's angry. He's going to avenge.

But this is not because he's a bad God. This is a good God. God is good to the good.

And he's hard on the bad. Eventually, he does. He does give the bad many opportunities to repent before he judges.

We even see that in Nahum. Chapter one, verse three. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power.

These things that are stated about God's character in chapter one, verses two and three are taken directly from God's own statements about himself in Exodus 34. When Moses asked for God to show him his glory and God said, I'll tell you what I you can't see that and live, but I will pass by and I'll declare my name before you. And we read in Exodus 34.

Verse five through seven. The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord. Now, the name of the Lord actually is a description of his character.

It says, here's what he here's what he declared. The Lord proclaimed the Lord that is Yahweh Yahweh Elohim, merciful and gracious, long suffering, abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin by no means clearing the guilty. That line is in Nahum.

Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, the children's children, the third and fourth generation. Now that he is by no means clears the guilty is actually what it says in Nahum one three after it says he's slow to anger and great in power that God is slow to anger is an Old Testament idea. Many people say, well, the God of the Old Testament, he's really always flying off the handle and killing people whenever they step out of line.

But Jesus, he's very patient and kind and a friend of sinners. So I wonder why God changed so much between the old and the New Testament. He didn't.

In the Old Testament, the Bible is very explicit. God is well, the way he just described himself to Moses, the Lord, merciful, gracious, long suffering, abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity. That's that's pretty.

That's pretty kind. But in Psalm 103, which is also in the Old Testament, describing God's character. And in words that name also has borrowed in this passage.

In Psalm 103, verse eight, it says, the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in mercy, slow to anger. God does get angry. And they make it very clear.

God is angry. It says he's jealous. He's avenging.

He's furious. In fact, he gets angry, but he's slow to get angry. When he does get angry, you don't want to be on his bad side.

But in the Old Testament, we don't find a God who's got a short fuse, who's got thin skin, who's peevish, who, you know, reacts violently every time someone does something to slight him. That's not God in the Old Testament. That's not how he's described in the Old Testament or the New.

There's no difference between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New. Jesus said when they said to Jesus and John, who is your father? He says he's the same one that you say is your God. And he said, my father is the same one of the God of the Old Testament that you worship.

And he said, if you've seen me, you've seen my father. So it's clear that Jesus and God in the Old Testament are not different. But we do see instances both in the New Testament,

like in the book of Revelation or in the Old Testament, where God, though he's slow to anger, eventually says, OK, that's enough.

I'm I'm now you got me mad. No more, Mr. Nice guy. And so that's what Nam says.

This is how it is with Nineveh. Nineveh has had their over 100 years of violent pagan cruelty. And God just said, man, I'm done with you now.

And I'm angry now and I'm going to take you out. So it says in verse nine, what do you conspire against Yahweh? He will make an utter end of it. Affliction will not rise up a second time.

That is, when God strikes Nineveh, that's it only takes one blow to take him out. They won't rise up again to have to be hit down again. When he slaps him down, they're down, knocks him out.

The fight is over. It will not rise up a second time for while tangled like thorns and while drunken like drunkards. They shall be devoured like stubble, fully dried from you comes forth one who plots evil against Yahweh, a wicked counselor.

Now, the wicked counselor is probably a reference to Sennacherib, who is the king of Assyria at that time, who had, of course, destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and had sought and destroyed many of the villages of Judah and had tried to destroy Jerusalem. If an angel of the Lord had not been sent out to kill 185,000 Assyrians outside the gates of Jerusalem, Jerusalem almost certainly would have come down to this. Sennacherib, this evil counselor, has made plans, plots against Yahweh and his people, but they did not succeed.

And he was now going to experience himself what he had intended for others. Verse 12, Thus says the Lord, though they are safe and likewise many, yet in this manner they will be cut down. When he passes through, though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more.

For now I will break off his yoke from you and burst your bonds apart. Now, at first he's talking about, well, he is talking about Nineveh. They are many and they are secure.

They seem to be in a position to not succumb to invasion or to suffer any harm from other nations. But even though that is true, they will be cut down. And then this is addressed perhaps the latter part of this verse to either Judah or maybe all the smaller nations that Assyria had afflicted.

And it says, you know, he's not going to pass through you anymore. You got nothing to fear from him anymore. He's gone.

He will, God's breaking your bonds. That is, if you suffered captivity to the Assyrians,

well, you're going to be set free because they're going to be dead. They're going to be no more.

Verse 14, The Lord has given a command concerning you, Nineveh. Your name shall be perpetuated no longer. Out of the house of your gods, I will cut off the carved image and the molded image.

I will dig your grave for your vile. Now, this saying that their name will be perpetuated no more. There's something like this later on, too.

There's another time when he talked about how they'll be kind of not remembered, as we shall see later on. But it's really interesting. This city was one of the greatest cities in the world in its day.

But it was so destroyed and apparently covered by the sands of time that its ruins were encountered 200 years later by Xenophon. Xenophon, the great Greek military general who passed through the region, he didn't even know that that was Nineveh. He didn't know what it was.

He thought it was some Parthian city, some unidentified Parthian city. It was that forgotten. Now, just about a century later, Alexander the Great came through the same region, and he didn't even know there had ever been a city there.

So, within 200 years, its name had been forgotten, and it was misidentified by Xenophon. And then 100 years later, Alexander went through that region, didn't even see anything. Didn't even know anything had ever been there.

That's how much this great city, it reminds me a little bit, frankly, of the first Planet of the Apes movie. You know, where at the very end he sees the arm of the Statue of Liberty coming out of the sands on the shore. Suddenly you realize this is where New York used to be.

You know, and how many centuries earlier, who knows. But it's like New York City, the greatest, most prosperous city, the largest city, and the most powerful nation in the world. And then, you know, sometime later, you know, a former American who had known New York City was there and doesn't even know it's there.

It's just an ape village, you know. And, you know, the realization when you see that Statue of Liberty arm sticking up out of the sand, you think, oh, that's supposed to hit you hard. Like, this used to be New York City, and now it's unrecognizable.

That's kind of how Nineveh was. It was the New York City of its day. And yet, a few hundred years later, it was forgotten.

It was unrecognizable. And that's what God predicted would be the case. He says in

verse 15, Behold, on the mountains, the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace, O Judah, keep your appointed feasts, perform your vows, for the wicked one shall no more pass through you.

He is utterly cut off. Now, this is a reference, of course, to Assyria will no longer pass through. Judah really suffered at the hands of Assyria at an earlier time.

But that wouldn't happen anymore. Now, the statement, Behold, on the mountains, the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace, is a direct quote from Isaiah. Isaiah had written probably 100 years earlier than Nahum.

Thank you very much. Isaiah was, of course, much more famous than Nahum. Isaiah was a cousin to the king, for one thing, and a nobleman who had access to the king to give counsel and to have him wanted.

Nahum may not have had anything like those kinds of privileges and might have been much more obscure. So Isaiah's prophecy would have been known and remembered by Nahum. Probably he'd read the book of Isaiah.

But we see in Isaiah 52 this very same statement. It says, How beautiful upon the mountains, Isaiah 52, 7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, Your God reigns. Now the interesting thing about this, Nahum doesn't quote the whole verse.

Just behold on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace. That's from Isaiah. Now the passage in Isaiah is quoted by Paul twice, once in Romans and actually alluded to in Ephesians.

Where he's talking about the armor of God, he says, Have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. There's a reference to your feet and the gospel of peace. That comes from Isaiah.

Beautiful are the feet of those who bring the gospel of peace. The word good news is gospel. Euangelion is the Greek word for gospel in the New Testament.

It's also the Greek word for the good tidings here in the Greek Old Testament. So Paul sees Isaiah's prophecy as a reference to Paul's own preaching of the gospel. That's how he's using it in Romans.

He quotes it as if it's a reference to him and his mission. That's in Romans 10, 15 that he quotes it. But Nahum is quoting it now, apparently with a different import.

The good news that Nahum has is not the gospel of Jesus, but he's got good news nonetheless. The word good news or euangelion gospel in the Greek language simply

means good tidings. It's generic.

It's like a good announcement. We call the message of Christ the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of the kingdom, the gospel of salvation, the gospel of grace. It just means the good news about those.

The word gospel, euangelion, means good news. And it was a secular word. It has become almost exclusively a religious word now.

You hear the word gospel. You're going to think of the four gospels or the preaching of Jesus or preaching of the church is the gospel. But in biblical times, in biblical Greek, it was a normal word for good tidings.

It so happens that the early church picked up the expression gospel, good tidings, for the announcement that they were making, which is the message of the kingdom, the message of salvation, the message of grace. But Nahum is using it simply to refer to the good tidings that this ancient enemy of Israel and of all the other nations around is going to be no more. And it would be utterly cut off.

Chapter two, it says, he who scatters has come up before your face. Man, the fort, watch the road, strengthen your flanks, fortify your power mightily. Now, this is this is actually God challenging Nineveh.

Nineveh says you have scattered. But now I'm going to scatter. I'm going to scatter you.

You are being confronted to the face with me, the one who really scatters. And go ahead, do what you can to resist. Man, the fort, watch the road, strengthen your flanks, fortify your might, your power mightily.

For the Lord will restore the excellence of Jacob. Like the excellence of Israel, for the empty years have emptied them out and ruined their vine branches. 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.

Now, the word spears there actually in the Hebrew is literally cypresses. I noticed that the ESV translates it the spears of Cyprus, like referring to spears, apparently made from Cyprus wood and referred to Cyprus's here. But it's not about weapons.

It says the chariots rage in the streets. They jostle one another in the broad roads. They seem like torches.

They run like lightning. There's something rather humorous about this verse. I like to relate because when I remember it makes me chuckle.

Back in the 70s, when I first sat under teaching about the end times. A lot of teachers like to list prophecies about the end times and how they are fulfilled in modern times. Just to show that the Bible is inspired and that we are living in the times that it spoke of.

And they'd have all kinds of verses that they allege about airplanes and helicopters and all kinds of things like that from modern technology. Which, by the way, those verses were not really talking about that. And this is one of the verses they used.

Habakkuk 2.4. Excuse me, Nahum 2.4. They said this refers to automobiles in the freeways. The chariots rage in the streets. They jostle one another in the broad roads.

There's so much traffic. They bump into each other and wrecks and things like that. They seem like torches because they have headlights, bright headlights.

And they run like lightning. You know, those cars go a lot faster than chariots and things that they were familiar with back then. So, this is talking about automobiles in the last days.

Now, the prophecy is not about the last days. Nahum doesn't have the last days in mind at all. He has the destruction of Nineveh in mind.

This is the Babylonians invading Nineveh with their chariots. And, you know, they're not really moving like lightning. But there's some hyperbole here.

It's just like in Joel when it describes the locusts coming against Jerusalem. A locust plague. It talks about men running on the walls and coming through the windows and destroying everything.

It's actually talking about locusts. But this imagery is always poetic imagery that the Hebrew poets and prophets love to use. It's just talking about the numerous chariots and the numerous troops that are coming.

It says, he remembers his worthies. They stumble in their walk. Now, this, they stumble in their walk specifically is referring to the Babylonians attacking the city.

But they're in such a hurry. They're bumping into each other, stumbling over each other. It's like a rapid advance where the people in the rear ranks are advancing faster than the ones in the front.

They're stumbling over. They're so eager. They're so aggressive.

And there's also going to be mention of dead bodies that they're stumbling over. So as they're killing Assyrians in their invasion, the invaders are stumbling over the bodies there too. They stumble in their walk.

They make haste to her walls. And the defense is prepared. The gates of the rivers are

opened and the palace is dissolved.

Now, I mentioned that the river dissolving the palace was something that actually did happen. And it's rather an interesting fulfillment. The Assyrian capital was attacked by Babylon and the Medes.

And it was besieged for two years before it fell. But a rise in the River Tigris, which was near the wall of the city, washed away a three-mile section of the wall, which allowed, of course, the enemies to get in. Now, what's interesting about that is that there was a pagan prophecy that the Ninevites knew of that said that Nineveh would never fall until the River Tigris became its enemy.

Some pagan soothsayer had said Nineveh will never fall until Tigris River becomes its enemy. Well, when the Tigris River rose and washed out three miles of the wall, the king of Assyria believed this was the portent of doom that they had actually had prophesied by their pagan prophets. And he went into his house, took all his concubines and so forth, and burned the house down on himself.

So he committed suicide because the river washed away the wall. And he assumed that was going to mean the end of his empire. And he was right in this particular case.

He was right. So, verse 7 says, but see, in verse 6, is the gates of the rivers are opened and the palaces dissolved. That's kind of a reference to what actually happened.

It is decreed she shall be led away captive, meaning Nineveh, she is Nineveh. She shall be brought up and her maid servants shall lead her with the voice of doves beating their breasts. The voice of doves means mourning, like mourning doves.

It's a sound of mourning. Beating their breasts was a means of expressing agony. They're beating their breasts in agony.

You might remember when Jesus told the parable, the publican and the Pharisee praying in the temple. And the Pharisee congratulated himself for being so righteous according to the law. And it says the publican dared not even to look into heaven.

He beat his breast and said, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. It's a sign of agony, a little bit like tearing your clothing. In biblical times, many times people tore their garments when they're in agony.

But that's what it's talking about. They'll be led off into captivity. Verse 8, though Nineveh of old was like a pool of water, now they flee away.

Halt, halt, they cry, but no one turns back. Now, not entirely clear how this would be understood, but a pool of water is where water is stored. If water begins to leak out of the pool, then, of course, it has to be replaced or else it gets empty.

It's like the pool of water is a secure place to keep water for later. Nineveh was a secure place, not easily violated, not expected to ever be emptied. But now the waters are running out.

The people are going into captivity. You can call them back, but they won't come back. This is the end for them.

No one turns back. Take spoil of silver, take spoil of gold. There is no end of treasure or wealth of every desirable prize.

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.

A lot of references to sort of the physiological effects of being either despondent or terrified. Their heart melts, a very common image in the Bible for losing their courage. Their courage vanishes, their heart melts.

Their knees shake. Their faces are drained of color. All the blood runs out of their faces.

So these are just the graphic pictures of how the people physiologically in fear are experiencing these conditions. Where is the dwelling of the lions and the feeding place of the young lions? Where the lion walked and the lioness and lion's cub and no one made them afraid. A lot of great nations liken themselves to lions.

Babylon was called a lion, Assyria called a lion. In fact, if you go to the British Museum and see the bas-reliefs, you'll see a lot of the stone lions and so forth that stood at the entryways, gates and so forth that have been brought back by archaeologists. Lions were a very common symbol of being, well, the chief animal.

Even in our time we call it the king of the beasts and it was always considered to be so. It has no natural enemies and therefore it is the ruler of the wild. And so kings, Babylon, Assyria, kings like that like to have lion imagery depicting themselves and so forth.

And so that imagery is picked up, you know, where is that lion? It says where is the dwelling place 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. The lion tore in pieces enough for his cubs, killed for his lionesses, filled his caves with his prey and his dens with flesh. This is a reference to conquering nations to become rich for themselves and feed themselves.

Behold, I'm against you, says the Lord of hosts. I will burn your chariots in smoke and the sword shall devour your young lions. Probably meaning the princes.

I will cut off your prey from the earth and the voice of your messengers shall be heard no more. Okay, just one more chapter here. This is the woe to Nineveh.

The first three verses just give a, you know, a list of very graphic battle scenes, very violent battle. Woe to the bloody city. It is all full of lies and robbery.

Its victims never depart. The noise of the whip, the noise of rattling wheels, of galloping horses, of clattering chariots, horsemen charged with the bright sword and glittering spear. There is a multitude of the slain, a great number of bodies, countless corpses.

They stumble over the corpses. I mentioned earlier that the stumbling of the Babylonians mentioned in an earlier place includes stumbling over the corpses of the people they've killed. Now, Nineveh is compared to a harlot as Jerusalem sometimes is in certain prophecies.

When the prophecy is against Jerusalem, she is compared to a harlot too. And Babylon also. In fact, in Revelation, Babylon is called the great harlot.

A city is referred to as a harlot because of its impurity. In the case of Jerusalem, it's because she breaks her vow to God, who is her husband, and she worships other gods, which is comparable to being a harlot, committing adultery. In the case of Babylon or Assyria, when they're called harlots, it just means they're impure.

They're disgustingly impure, and they're going to be humiliated for it. It says in verse five, he remembers his worthies. They stumble.

I read that. No, no, no, no. I'm sorry.

Wrong chapter. Very good. Because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, the mistress of sorceries who sells nations through her harlotries and families through her sorceries.

Behold, I am against you, says the Lord of hosts. I will lift up your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your shame.

I will cast abominable filth upon you and make you vile and make you a spectacle. It shall come to pass that all who look upon you will flee from you and say, Nineveh is laid waste. Who will bemoan her? Where shall I seek comforters for you? Here we have, again, the rhetorical questions.

Who will bemoan her? Where shall I seek comforters? The idea is no one. No one will mourn for her. No one will comfort her.

Are you better than no amen? Again, this is a reference to Thebes on the Nile, which fell earlier than this prophecy in 663 B.C. It says, Are you better than no amen? That was situated by the river that had the waters around her, whose rampart was like a sea, like the sea, whose wall was like the sea. Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was boundless. Put and Lubin were your helpers, yet she was carried away.

She went into captivity. Her young children also were dashed to pieces at the head of every street. They cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.

You also will be drunk. You also will be hidden. You also will seek refuge from the enemy.

Now, Nineveh is being compared to Thebes. Now, Thebes fell to Assyria, to the Ninevites, the Assyrians. And he says, Now they fell, although they had allies, they had fortresses, they had natural defenses, and yet they fell.

Are you better than them? The answer is no, you're not. You're going to fall also. Now, when it says that they had the waters around her in verse 8, whose rampart was like the sea, I don't know if this is referring to there being actually a moat around the city.

Or if it's just saying that their walls and their defenses were so great, it was as if they had a sea around them, a moat the size of the sea, that is impenetrable. It's hard to know exactly how this is met, but it's making it very clear that the defenses of Thebes were impressive. And one would not have predicted its fall, but it fell.

Likewise, one would not have predicted Ninevites' fall, but it fell too. And that's the point that's being made. Verse 12, All your strongholds are fig trees, with ripened figs.

They are shaken, and they fall into the mouth of the eater. Surely your people in your midst are women. The gates of your land are wide open for your enemies.

Fire shall devour the bars of your gates. Now, that the strongholds are like figs, ripe figs that you can shake off a tree and drop them into your mouth. That's, you know, the idea of ripe fig trees ready to fall is used in other connections in the Bible.

The idea of a ripe fig is that it's going to fall. If it isn't picked, it's going to fall. You can just shake the tree and it'll come off.

In Isaiah 34, it talks about the stars falling like the first ripe figs of a fig tree. The image was also used in the book of Revelation in chapter 6. The idea of stars falling like figs from a fig tree. The idea is figs from a fig tree, when they're ripe, aren't going to stay on the tree long.

You can shake them right off. And that's what your strongholds are like. And your people are like, are women.

Now, I don't know if that means that most of the men have been killed and that all that's left to defend the city are women. Or, more likely, it's mocking the men, saying they're really like women. They really are not strong, formidable warriors.

Now, of course, in our time, there's a totally different mentality about women in war. I mean, women go into the army and they're even involved in combat and things like that.

But through most of history, it was understood women are better at other things than defending a city.

Women have things they do that men cannot do, but men were the defenders of the city. Men were the strong ones. And to say your defenders are women is to suggest that you don't have very good defense.

You're going to fall. Draw your water for the siege. Fortify your strongholds.

Go into the clay and tread the mortar. Make strong the brick kiln. There the fire will devour you.

The sword will cut you off. It will eat you up like a locust. Now, it goes on and talks about this locust theme a little bit.

Nineveh is like a plague of locusts. It says, make yourself many like the locust. Make yourself many like the swarming locust.

You have multiplied your merchants more than the stars of heaven. The locust plunders and flies away. The commanders are like swarming locusts.

And your captains like great grasshoppers. Which camp in the hedges in the cold day. But when the sun rises, they flee away.

And the place where they are is not known. The idea here is that a locust plague is one of the most terrifying things to any agrarian society. When you see the locust plague coming, you're done.

Your economy is destroyed. You may die. You may starve.

Locusts are deadly. They don't actually bite or hurt people. But they just eat everything that people eat or that livestock eats.

And so starvation is often what results from it. So a locust plague is very terrifying. But he says, you know, on one cold night, they're all sleeping in the hedges.

When the sun rises, they leave. No one knows where they went. They're gone.

They are no more. In the case of the locust plague that came on Egypt in the book of Exodus. When Moses prayed for the locusts to go away, a strong wind came and blew them out to the sea, out to the Mediterranean.

And they just drowned out there. But, I mean, the locust plague, it comes and it goes. It comes and makes a big, does a lot of damage.

But then it goes and it's gone. It doesn't come back. And that's what Nineveh is like.

They've had their time of being like a locust plague in the region. They've done their harm. They've done their damage.

But they're going to be gone now. No one will even know where they went. That's what he's saying.

Verse 18. Your shepherds slumber, O King of Assyria. Your nobles rest in the dust.

Your people are scattered on the mountains, and no one gathers them. Your injury has no healing. Your wound is severe.

All who hear news of you will clap their hands over you, for upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually. In other words, there won't be really anyone to mourn you. They'll be celebrating your downfall.

Because there really isn't anyone that you haven't afflicted. You've hurt everybody around. You've left very few sympathizers.

It's one thing, and it's a great hurt to be destroyed. But it's another kind of hurt to realize that everyone's glad that you're gone. That nobody cares for you.

Everyone says, what a relief, good riddance. That's kind of adding insult to injury. The actual destruction of the city is the injury.

The insult is everyone's glad that it happened. And that's how Nineveh is mocked, bewailed, lamented in the book of Nahum. And as we know, it came about even as Nahum said.

So, that's the book of Nahum. .