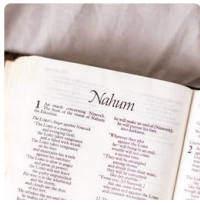


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Nahum



Nahum - Steve Gregg

The book of Nahum, written during a time of Assyrian rule and addressing the city of Nineveh, showcases the divine judgment of God upon wickedness. The speaker explores the significance of the poetic style used by the prophets, highlighting God's firm stance on holding the guilty accountable. While the Assyrians may have temporarily repented due to Jonah's preaching, their destructive ways continued, leading to their ultimate downfall. The speaker emphasizes the powerful imagery in Nahum, illustrating the impending ruin of Nineveh and the fear that gripped its inhabitants.

Transcript

This morning we're going to look at the short book of Nahum, which is right after the book of Micah in our Old Testament. In the Greek Old Testament, called the Septuagint, the translators almost three centuries before Christ translated the Hebrew text into Greek and made their own arrangement of books. And in the Septuagint, Nahum follows Jonah immediately.

For some reason, our, well the Hebrew canon and ours, places the book of Micah between Jonah and Nahum. And it's not really clear why. It seems obvious the reason that the Septuagint places this right after Jonah is because it's a sequel to Jonah.

Jonah and Nahum are the only two prophets who prophesied against the city of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. And of course, Assyria is that nation that eventually destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel. And even prior to that, the Jews had no love for Assyria.

Assyria was a brutal superpower in its day. And when it conquered people, it was extremely ruthless, very cruel. I've read and heard descriptions of how they treated their captives, and it was, frankly, it'd be distasteful to describe.

They weren't just satisfied to conquer people and kill them. They wanted them tortured and their lives ruined rather than necessarily all killed. And so, of course, everybody feared Assyria because Assyria was the growing superpower in the time that both Jonah and Nahum wrote.

But Nahum wrote later, after Jonah, and you might recall, everyone knows the story of Jonah, how he went to Nineveh at a time, actually he was very reluctant to go. He didn't want Nineveh to be converted and saved by God. But God told him to go, and he preached in Nineveh, and they repented.

Now, when a nation repents, Nineveh is not a nation, it was a capital city, but the repentance of Nineveh meant that the king of Assyria would not be, at least for a while, aggressive and ruthless. I mean, if he's repenting of his evil before God, he would at least briefly end his campaign of destruction and cruelty. So, in a sense, Jonah's preaching may have saved his own country Israel from a more immediate destruction at the hands of Assyria because the Assyrians repented, but it didn't last that long.

And it was sometime later, 150 years later, after Jonah's time, that Assyria did fall to the year 612 BC. It is usually assumed that Nahum, who is at least a couple of generations later than Jonah, was probably prophesying fairly near the time of Nineveh's impending destruction. So, he was certainly prophesying before 612, because that's when Nineveh fell, and he's predicting the fall, so he's not writing after that time.

So, the latest possible date of Nahum would be 612 BC, but the earliest possible date would be around 663 BC. Now, between 663 and 612, there's about 50 years, so there's a span of about 50 years that Nahum could be anywhere in there. Jonah was before that time, but the reason we say that the earliest possible date would be 663 is because that's when the Assyrians conquered the people of Thebes in Egypt.

And Thebes is mentioned, and its destruction is mentioned in this book in chapter 3 in verse 8, where he says to Assyria, are you better than Noah Ammon? Now, Noah Ammon is the ancient name for Thebes, and all commentators will point that out. So, are you better than Thebes? And then he goes on and talks about how Thebes had fallen to the Assyrians. So, the Assyrians are not more invincible than their victims.

They had conquered Thebes at the time this was written, and he's saying, well, you're not going to be any more permanent than they were. You took them down, you'll have your turn to be taken down. So, since Thebes fell in 663 BC, this was written after 663, but before 612.

So, there's a 50-year gap in there. Now, if Nahum was early in that period, he would be contemporary with Manasseh, the evil king, the most evil king that Judah ever had. Manasseh was the son of Hezekiah, and he reigned after the fall of the northern kingdom.

Now, Nahum was apparently in the region of the northern kingdom, so he must be one of the few that was not deported by the Assyrians when they conquered Israel in the north. Or he might have been a Judean. It's not really clear where he lived.

He was in Elkashite, it says, which means he's from Elkash, but the city of Elkash has not been certainly identified by scholars today, so no one knows for sure. Some identify it up in the region of Galilee, but that's the very region that by his time would have been largely depopulated by the Assyrian overthrow of the northern kingdom. Now, he does have one line in there that might suggest he was a Judean, that is, he was part of Judah, which had not been conquered.

They had been threatened, but not conquered by Assyria in the time of Hezekiah, and this would be after that. Then ask what Hezekiah's son, who reigned after him. Nahum 115, 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 statement, how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good tidings, is obviously a partial quote from Isaiah, who said the same thing back in Isaiah 52, 7, who lived considerably earlier than this, probably at least a generation earlier. And so Nahum seems to be influenced by Isaiah's prophecies, but he does address Judah. He says, O Judah, keep your appointed feasts.

So, if he is speaking to Judah in this one statement, he might well have been among the people of Judah, and therefore he'd be a part of the southern kingdom. So, no one really knows where he was exactly from, because his city, Elkash, has never been identified with certainty. So, we have a general time period.

If he was into the time of Manasseh, that was a time very inhospitable to prophets of Jehovah. Manasseh was the king who required all the people of Judah to worship idols, and he himself sacrificed his children to Molech, and so forth. It was a terrible time of apostasy in Judah.

However, a couple generations later, Josiah was the king. And many feel like, you know, since Josiah's brought about reforms and so forth, it could have also been a revival of prophecy. The prophet Jeremiah was contemporary.

Ezekiel was contemporary with Josiah. And it may be that Nahum was also. The book itself doesn't really tell us where he lived in any way that we can identify, or the exact year, or who was king in Judah, because he's not talking to Judah, except that one verse where he addresses Judah in a hopeful way, a promising sort of way.

The book is otherwise addressed to Nineveh. Now, when these prophets wrote prophecies to these pagan nations, and Jeremiah had some chapters where he did. He didn't address Nineveh, but he addressed Assyria, and also he addressed Babylon, he addressed Edom, and the Philistines, and so forth.

Isaiah did also. A lot of these prophets addressed these pagan nations. It's not clear

whether they actually went to these pagan nations to speak in their ears these prophecies, or whether they are really speaking for the benefit of the Jews who are going to be reading these prophecies, an encouraging word that God has this to say to those people, if they would ever hear it.

They might not ever have a chance to hear it. Jonah actually did go to Nineveh, and he did preach 40 days, and Nineveh will perish, and then they repented. But whether Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Nahum, and Obadiah, these, you know, they did speak prophecies to the pagan nations.

Whether they actually traveled around the whole Near East and visited these capitals and spoke these words in their ears is doubtful. I mean, it's not impossible. We're not told that they did or that they didn't, so we don't really know.

All we know is they uttered these prophecies against these nations as if spoken to them. But again, that could be more of a way of encouraging their actual readers in Judah that the enemies, this is what God has to say to them, but the enemies may never really hear the prophecies. Or they could have sent them as letters to the capitals of these places.

We have no idea, we're not told, other than Jonah himself who went to Nineveh, how these other prophets, you know, managed to address these pagan nations. It may have been sent as a letter to Nineveh. It might have been that he went there, or maybe that he just was sitting comfy in Judah and wrote this denunciation of Nineveh so that, you know, those who would read it would recognize that this is what God is going to do to their enemies, and therefore it would be an encouragement to his readers.

Let's just actually look at the book itself. He says the bird, oh I should say this, the name Naam is related to the name Nehemiah in Hebrew, and Naam means comfort. Nehemiah means the comfort of Yahweh, and therefore it's a common root word for names.

There's several Nehemiahs in the Bible. There's only one Naam that we know of. Well, with the possible exception in Luke, it may be this Naam or another.

In the genealogy of what I consider the genealogy of Mary, some think it's the genealogy of Joseph. In Luke chapter 3 and verse 25, it says the son of Mattithiah, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Nagai, and a whole bunch of other names in following, but that we have there the son of Amos and the son of Nahum. Now the Amos in question is not the prophet Amos, and the Naum may or may not be this prophet.

We don't really, most of these names in these genealogies, we know nothing about them except their names and who is said to have been their parent and their son, but this is the only other place as Luke 3.25 that mentions Naam, or that the name appears, whether it's the same name or a different one. Okay, now I think we can look at this. It says the burden against Nineveh, the book of the vision of Nahum, the Al-Kashite.

God is jealous and the Lord avenges, the Lord avenges and is furious. Now you'll notice, well maybe you will or maybe you won't, this is the whole book's pretty much written in poetry. That's what the prophets did.

Hebrew poetry, if you're not aware, is characterized not by rhyme as American or English poetry usually is, it's characterized by repetition, by couplets, either the same thing is said different ways, twice in a row, maybe three times in a row. The Hebrew ear really appreciated the aesthetic sound of being able to say the same thing different ways, and so you'll notice right at the beginning, verse 2, God is jealous, the Lord avenges, the Lord avenges and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, he reserves wrath for his enemies.

Now notice that the first two lines are essentially the same, it repeats the fact that he takes vengeance. The next two lines picks up that word vengeance and says, and that's on his enemies, then the line that follows that is saying the same thing as the third line, he reserves wrath for his enemies. So this is very common in Hebrew poetry.

It's a little, makes it a little tedious perhaps for us English readers, and it would, didn't he say that already? Yeah he did, and in fact the reason he's repeating himself is that's what's, that's what characterizes Hebrew poetry is this kind of repetition. Now almost all the prophets wrote in poetry, so they were not only inspired with a message from God, they were also literary people, they could, they were poets. And so he starts out saying that God is jealous, meaning over his people Israel.

At this point in time Assyria had destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel, they either had or would soon, no they already had threatened Judah also. So God is jealous means that he's protective, like a man might be jealous if his wife was, if some guy started trying to you know flirt with his wife or seduce his wife, husband would be jealous over that. Or if somebody was going to damage his wife, he'd be, his protectiveness of his wife would be inflamed, and that's what God speaks about here.

He's inflamed with protective jealousy over his wife Israel because of her oppressors who had attacked her. He says in verse three, the Lord is slow to anger and great in power and will not at all acquit the wicked. Now these ideas are restatements of things that are in earlier revelation that God gave.

In Exodus chapter 34, when Moses asked God to show him his glory, God described his own character instead, instead of showing him his, well I guess he showed him his glory too, but it was mainly in the form of a verbalized revelation of who God is, speaking of his character. In Exodus 34, verse 6 and 7, it says the Lord passed before him and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation. It says God will by no means clear the guilty,

and that's what he says here in the second part of verse 3, he will not at all acquit the wicked.

Now this means of course the unrepentant wicked. He's made it very clear, especially in the days of Jonah, to the same people that God will acquit, or he will at least overlook the sins of the wicked if they repent. But the wicked here are referred to those who are bent and continuing in their wickedness.

He's not going to act like that's nothing. He's not going to say, I will, no big deal. God's not lenient.

We have to understand that God is not lenient, though he is gracious. There's a difference between being lenient and being gracious. A lenient ruler or a lenient father, he doesn't really care that much what people do.

If his children disobey him, he's lenient. Boys will be boys, you know, who cares? That's leniency. But a gracious father is one who cares a great deal about the behavior of his children.

He's very offended when they do wrong, but he can forgive if they repent. He's gracious. He doesn't always have to hold a grudge.

A gracious person can forgive, but it's not because they don't care about the offense. A lenient person is someone who doesn't care about the offense. And what the scripture teaches is that God is gracious, but he's not lenient.

If somebody's wicked and they don't repent, he won't clear them. He won't just give them a pass. The statement there in verse three that says he's slow to anger is a line that's also found in Psalm 103, where David begins that Psalm by saying, bless the Lord, O my soul, bless the Lord, and do not forget all his benefits.

And then begins to list the kindness and the benefits that he's received from God. And one of the statements in Psalm 103, in verse eight, it says the Lord is slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. So Nahum is saying things about God that God has already said about himself or that the psalmist has said about him previously.

He's not revealing any new information about God's character, but God's known and established character is the foundation of his actions, in this case toward Nineveh, because he's been slow to anger. He could have taken that out a lot earlier because they deserved it for a long time, but he's not acquitting them. The fact that God has maybe postponed judgment doesn't mean that he's taken the whole matter of judgment off the table.

He's going to do what he's supposed to do. It's now been at the time that Nineveh actually fell, it was 150 years after Jonah had preached to them. So when Jonah preached

them, they were 40 days away from destruction.

And then because of repentance, they bought themselves another, you know, three or four generations, which is long enough to restore their corruption. You know, I mean, it's very seldom the case, even in revivals where there's widespread repentance, that two or three generations afterward still feel the effects of it in any way that they're aware of. Usually the children of a revival generation still, you know, have a little bit of religion in them, but the third generation often, they're no different than if there'd never been a revival.

Revivals, generally speaking, do not impact nations for several generations. So Nineveh, being a pagan nation, had drifted back to its evil ways, and God was slow to anger that he was not going to neglect judgment altogether. He says there in the middle of verse three, the Lord has his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

He rebukes the sea and makes it dry and 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 heaves at his presence.

Yes, the world and all who dwell in it. Now, these statements are not to be taken literally, obviously. The mountains did not quake before him and the hills melt.

This is a very fairly common way of speaking in the Old Testament poetry. It's, we could call it hyperbole, or we could even call it apocalyptic. That things that really take place in the political or military sphere, just wars, the downfall of nations, the rise of nations, those kinds of things that we see happen throughout history and don't normally think of supernatural because it's usually as the result of warfare and things like that.

Those things are seen as God's doing, and they're they're described in the apocalyptic literature of the Bible in terms of earth shaking, even cosmic disturbances, stars falling from the heavens, those kinds of things. But they're really just talking about an earth shaking development where like a major nation goes down you know and ceases to exist. That's history changing, and the typical poetic language of the Hebrew prophets speaks of like mountains are shaking, the stars are falling, the sun goes dark, those kinds of things are often found in the Old Testament prophets.

That's their way of speaking. When he says the Lord has his way in the whirlwind and the storm, it actually does, I mean it's possible that he's actually speaking in terms of when there really are tornadoes, when there really are storms, that God is in a sense sovereign over them, that he is having his way with them, he's bringing about his purposes through them. And certainly the book of Jonah showed that God brought a storm when Jonah was at sea, and then he stilled the storm when Jonah was thrown overboard.

So there's a sense in which the prophets are would literally say that God has his way with storms and with natural disasters. But when they talk about hills melting and those kind of things, you realize okay he's not talking about real normal storms and such. In this particular case he's thinking of tumultuous developments, world developments, and that's really what happened.

I mean in terms of near eastern geopolitical landscape, the fall of Syria was a major development because it fell to Babylon, and Babylon became the new superpower. It'd be very much as if America would fall to China. And you know we've been since World War II, America's been the world's superpower.

Soviet Union was a competing super powerful law, but they kind of lost a lot of that prestige and power, and we are pretty much the world's superpower. But China's rising, and if let's just say it's a war, and China conquered America, and we were brought under the Chinese communist government, that'd be an earth-shaking development. I mean it would change everything geopolitically, and certainly for our lives.

It'd be like a different world had come. The old world had passed, and a new one had come. That kind of imagery is used for that kind of political change.

It says in verse 6, 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. Again this is largely figurative, but God's anger is often likened to fire. This rhetorical questioning is one of the ways that prophets get a point across sometimes too.

Who can stand? The idea is like probably nobody. I mean it's a question you're not really supposed to be able to answer. Who knows who will stand? The point is the mere posing of the question rhetorically.

This way of saying not many will, maybe none. Malachi uses the same expression. You know, when he actually talks about John the Baptist and Christ coming in Malachi chapter 3, he says, you know, the Lord whom you seek will come to his holy temple, but who can stand when he does? You see the same question raised at the end of Revelation chapter 7, when you've got all this apocalyptic imagery of the mountains are shaking, and people are hiding in the caves, they say save us, hide us from the wrath of the Lamb for his great day of wrath is coming.

Who is able to stand? Those kinds of questions are rhetorical. You're not really, you're not saying, well this person, that person, you're not supposed to really list off the answer to the question. It's basically emphasizing probably not many, maybe none will stand.

This is going to be a bad thing. It's going to be, I mean, for the people who are judged. In verse 7 it says, the Lord is good.

He's been talking about how angry the Lord is, how damaging he is toward his enemies,

but he's, he does it because he's good. His enemies are bad. From the standpoint of those being judged, they might not see God as good, certainly not in the sense of benevolent to them, but God stands over all the affairs of all people, good and bad, and he is the standard one who's good, and all things are going to be measured by what he is like.

Those who are like him will be counted good. Those who are unlike him will be counted evil. So judgment upon the wicked is a function of good.

When people say, well I can't believe there'd be a loving God who would wipe out all those Canaanites or whatever. Well, the Canaanites were bad, real bad, and it was because God is not bad, he's good, that he couldn't tolerate that kind of stuff. To those who are sympathetic toward God's enemies, or who are God's enemies, God doesn't seem good because he does take care of business.

He does wipe out those who should be wiped out. And if you're one of those people, or your country is one of those countries, or you're sympathetic for those who are, then of course you say, well, you know, that's almost a challenge, the idea that God is good in your mind. But actually, his judgment of the wicked is a manifestation that he's good, he's not like them.

There's a contrast between him and them. That's why he's got a controversy against them and takes them down. He says, God is, the Lord is good, the stronghold in the day of trouble.

He knows those who trust him, but with an overflowing flood, he will make an utter end of its place, meaning Nineveh's, and darkness will pursue his enemies. Darkness will pursue his enemies, probably is just a poetic way of saying, they're, you know, it's not going to get light for them again. They can't escape the darkness.

This is a permanent, you know, darkness coming upon them. Darkness, just like fire is a very typical Old Testament image for God's wrath and judgment, so darkness is a very common image of disaster coming on people. What, he says, what do you conspire against the Lord, he's asking Nineveh.

This conspiracy against the Lord must certainly refer to the time when Sennacherib came down against Jerusalem and was hoping to destroy Jerusalem in the time of Hezekiah, but he was thwarted by God. But it says, what do you conspire against the Lord? He will make an utter end of it. Affliction will not rise up a second time.

Now, when the Assyrians besieged Jerusalem, hoping to destroy it, God made a total end of that siege by sending an angel out to kill 185,000 Assyrian warriors outside the walls, which made them retreat and they never returned. So, he says, affliction will not rise up a second time. That is the affliction coming upon Jerusalem by the Assyrians.

No repeat of that attack ever occurred. 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 the Lord, a wicked counselor.

Again, probably referring to Sennacherib who came against Jerusalem. Thus says the Lord, though they are safe and likewise many, yet in the manner, in this manner, they will be cut down. But he passes through, though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more.

When he says, I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more, he's probably speaking to Jerusalem there. Jerusalem had been afflicted by the Assyrian invasion. And yet because of Hezekiah turning to God, the Assyrians withdrew and they never came back.

So, God was no longer going to afflict Jerusalem at their hands. A century later or more, he would afflict them by the Babylonians, but that'd be another generation, different corrupt group in Jerusalem that was judged. Now, by the way, this was prophesied after all those things happened.

It's speaking of kind of in the future tense. But it's kind of a mixture of future and past tense. Though I have afflicted you.

Well, that's referring back to the time of Hezekiah. Judah had been afflicted by Assyria, but not destroyed. And now the present generation he's talking to would not have to worry about the Assyrians doing that again, because he's not going to afflict them anymore.

He says, for now I will break off his yoke from you and burst your bonds apart. That is, God's going to deliver Israel from the bondage of the Assyrian empire. And even though Judah had not fallen and Jerusalem had not fallen, still Assyria governed the region.

They were still the empire that Jerusalem existed within. They just hadn't been conquered and destroyed. But all around them, the Assyrians controlled the world.

And so everyone in the world, in that part of the world, was pretty much under the yoke. He says, I'm going to break their yoke and I'm going to deliver you. The yoke is a bond.

Those are figures of subservience and oppression. The Lord has given a command concerning you. Your name shall be perpetuated no longer.

Meaning Nineveh. Out of the house of your gods, I will cut off the carved image and the molded image. I will dig your grave for you are vile.

Then he speaks to the people of Judah, behold on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace. Oh Judah, keep your appointed feasts, perform your vows, for the wicked one shall no more pass through you. He is utterly cut

off.

Now Judah apparently during the siege, when the Assyrians had besieged Jerusalem, probably didn't keep their appointed feasts. For one thing, the festivals of the Jewish calendar were times of celebration. And when you're besieged and you know, the villages around have been wiped out by your enemies and you're still in trouble, you're probably not in much of the mood to celebrate.

You're probably not going to keep your festivals as normal. But also, under siege, you're also short on food. In the ancient world, the major cities had walls around them, but all the farms and the peasants lived outside those walls because they needed a lot of acreage.

You can't have all that acreage within the walled city. So all the food was grown outside the city walls. And then when an invasion would occur, the people from the farms would flee into the city, they'd shut the gates, and they'd try to fortify themselves against the invaders.

But that means they're cut off from their food supply on the outside. These cities would have food stored up, but a finite amount. And so if the siege went on for months or more, they'd run out of food.

Now the festivals had a lot of eating, a lot of sacrifices offered. Sacrifices are food. So I mean, the festivals probably during the siege had been largely cut off.

But he says, I've got good news for you. He says, behold, on the mountains, the feet of him who brings good tidings. This word good tidings is the same, is a word that means good news, which is the word gospel.

In the Septuagint, it's eungalion, which is the word in the New Testament for the gospel. Now the word gospel is a generic word for good news. But of course in the New Testament, it's the good news of Christ, the good news of the kingdom of God.

In this case, the good news is of deliverance from the Assyrian threat. Now Isaiah had said something very much like this, and Nahum could hardly have said these words without knowing that he was repeating kind of something that an earlier prophet had said. And Isaiah says it in the context of the Messiah.

In Isaiah chapter 52, beginning at 52 7, it says, 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, which is Jerusalem, your God reigns. And then he goes on, before the end of the chapter, to describe the Messiah, which goes through the end of chapter 52 and through 53. Now most of us are familiar probably with Isaiah 53, one of the most famous descriptions of the Messiah in the Old Testament.

So Paul quotes Isaiah 52 7, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news. And he quotes it in Romans 10 as a reference to his own ministry bringing the good news of the Messiah. He sees Isaiah's good news as a reference to the messianic kingdom coming, which Paul was proclaiming.

It's, Nahum is using the same expression, he's bringing good news to Jerusalem, but it's not the Messiah. It's talking about the news of deliverance from the Assyrian threat, which would be what was hanging over everybody's head at the time, a great relief to know that God is going to end that situation. Now chapter 2 of Nahum, he who scatters has come up before your face.

Man the fort. Now here he's talking to the Ninevites about becoming the Babylonians and the Medes who would ultimately conquer them. He says, he who scatters has come up before your face.

Man the fort. Watch the road. Strengthen your flags.

Fortify your power mightily. He's saying do what you can to defend yourself. Of course it's not going to do any good because God is judging you.

You can go ahead and put up your defenses. Let's see how that works out for you. Verse 2, for the Lord will restore the excellence of Jacob like the excellence of Israel.

For the emptyers have emptied them out and ruined their vine branches. The shields of the 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. The chariots rage in the streets. They jostle one another in the broad roads.

They seem like torches. They run like lightning. He remembers his worthies.

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 there's quite a few things to talk about here. He talks about in verse 3, the shields of the mighty men are red, meaning with blood. It says the valiant men are in scarlet.

Some think this is a reference to the fact that Babylonians, the invaders, wore scarlet robes, red robes under their armor. And so say the mighty men are in scarlet. But it may also be simply saying that there's so much bloodshed that their robes are turned red, you know, by the blood stains.

There is in fact a similarity between that and a prophecy in Isaiah that talks about one who's trampled the winepress of the wrath of God and there's blood. Actually, Revelation 14 also talks about it. He tramples the winepress and his robes are red with blood.

So these, the invaders, their robes may be scarlet because of the blood or maybe because that was simply the color of the uniforms of the Babylonians. Now it says the chariots come with flaming torches in verse 3. In the day of his preparation and the spears are brandished. Now verse 4, there's kind of a funny anecdote about this.

There are people who have made, let's just say, collections of Old Testament passages which they think are prophetic of the end times. And, you know, different ones have thought they have found references to airplanes, helicopters, modern war machinery, and so forth in certain prophecies of the Old Testament. I have read books like that since I was young and to me they're kind of silly because they simply are taking a verse that has something that sounds like it could be about modern times, but you have to ignore the whole context of the verse itself in order to see it that way.

But they love to have a large number of prophecies from Bible times which seem to be fulfilled by the Old Testament in our times so that they can prove, wow, the Bible is really supernatural because, I mean, they talk about these present days in such graphic terms. Well, the Bible is supernatural and it is inspired by God, but there aren't any prophecies in the Old Testament that talk about our modern era. I mean, I've talked through the whole Old Testament many times.

I don't know of any prophecies that talk about modern technology, modern war machines, and things like that. But in one of those collections, actually several of those collections of prophecies that some people have published, Nahum chapter 2 verse 4 is included where it says, the chariots rage against the streets, they jostle one another in the broad roads, they seem like torches, they run like lightning. They say, well, this is apparently talking about automobiles, so they're, you know, the heavy traffic jostling each other in the broad freeways and so forth, getting in wrecks and stuff like that, and their headlights are like torches and they're so fast compared to ancient transportation that they seem to be like lightning.

This is an absurd interpretation of this because, again, it's somebody trying to multiply apparent prophecies about modern times without any validity. This is not talking about modern times. It's talking about the Nineveh being invaded by Babylonian chariots and by Median chariots, and it's basically saying it's so overrun that the chariots are overcrowding each other on the streets.

There's such a large force coming against Nineveh, and once they get through the walls and they're in the streets of the city, they're jostling each other and they're moving fast. And also, it mentions in verse 5, them stumbling as they walk. And who are these people stumbling? Well, it's the ones, it says, who are making haste to her walls.

So it's like the armies are so eager to assault the walls of Nineveh that they stumble over each other, just climbing over each other just to get there first. I want to knock them down. No, I want to.

It's basically talking about a chaotic, determined assault on the walls of Nineveh. And when it says in verse 5, he remembers his worthies, he means apparently he's referring to his own people. And unless, of course, he in this case means the invading army does, the commander of the invading army.

It's not entirely clear whether this is God or the invader, but it says in verse 6, the gates of the rivers are opened and the palace is dissolved. Now there's another reference to these rivers opening up in the book a little later on. Let me get a reference for you here.

Yeah, oh, it's earlier, an earlier reference in 1.8. It says, with an overflowing flood, he will make an utter end of its palace, of its place. The darkness will pursue his enemies. Now Nineveh had a, there was an ancient pagan prophecy among the Assyrians that Nineveh would not fall until the river Tigris attacked it, until the river Tigris became its enemy.

That's what the prophecy said. And it turns out that at the time of the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC, the Tigris river unexpectedly rose and it came up to the walls and undermined the walls so that about a three-mile section of the wall caved in. And therefore, there was a big gap for invaders to be able to make it through.

So it's largely due to a rise in the river that caused the wall to be undermined and collapse and allowed the invaders to come in. When the king of Nineveh, or of Assyria, saw this happen, he took it to be a fulfillment of their own prophecy, not one of God's, but a pagan prophecy, that Nineveh would not fall until the river Tigris became their enemy. And so he took his concubines and his wives and his riches into his house and burned the house down over himself.

He committed suicide. And so that's pretty much how Nineveh fell. But there are rivers, the reference to rivers here, as I said in chapter 1 and verse 8, with an overflowing flood, he will make an utter end of its place, could certainly refer to the flooding of the rivers.

And then in chapter 2, verse 6, it says the gates of the rivers are opened and the palace is dissolved. So this would be, no doubt, a reference to the actual events that later happened when Nineveh fell and the river Tigris taking the walls out. It says in chapter 2, verse 7, it is decreed, she shall be led away captive.

She shall be brought up. Her maid servants shall lead her, as with the voice of doves, beating their breasts. Though Nineveh was of old, like a pool of water, now they flee away.

Halt, halt, they cry, but no one turns back. That is, they're fleeing. And even if you call them, hey, stop running away, they're not going to stop.

They're going to not turn back. They're terrified. Take spoil, and even if they're armies, if they're soldiers flee and their commanders say, stop, come back, you know, don't run away.

They're going to ignore those orders and go. 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, which is a reference for being totally devoid of courage, and her knees shake. Much pain is in every side and all the faces are drained of color.

So here are several physiological descriptions of fear. The heart melts, the knees shake, the faces are drained of color. They're terrified.

Where is the dwelling of the lions? Now this is a rhetorical question too. The dwelling of the lions is no doubt a reference to Nineveh. And all these ancient Assyrian cities and so forth had statues of lions and things like that around their gates and so forth.

If you go to the British Museum in London, you can actually see some of these statues that have been brought over and discovered by archaeologists. There's a lion imagery. It's extremely commonplace with these nations because lions were considered to be the, you know, the king of the beast.

Just like now, when we think of them as the king of the beast, they were so regarded in ancient times too. 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. The lion tore in pieces enough for his cubs, killed for his lionesses, filled their caves with prey and his dens with flesh.

Now speaking figuratively, Assyria likened to a lion had torn up all kinds of nations to feed themselves and their own kin. They conquered all the nations around them and plundered them and so forth. Now they had their time to, you know, maul and attack and consume other nations.

Now this is their time. Where are they now? Where are these lions now? They're gone. Assyria's gone down.

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. I will cut off your prey from the earth and the voice of your messengers shall be heard no more.

Okay, finally, chapter three. We'll take this rather quickly. Woe to the bloody city.

It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victims never, its victim never departs. The noise of a whip, the noise of rattling wheels, of galloping horses, of clattering chariots, horsemen charge with bright sword and glittering spear.

There's a lot of graphic imagery of the warfare in the streets and so forth in this particular book. There is a multitude of slain, a great number of bodies, countless

corpses. They stumble over the corpses.

Because of the multitude of the harlotries, this of the seductive harlot, the mistress of sorceries, who sells nations through her harlotries and families through her sorceries. God uses this imagery of a nation being like a harlot or a fornication, a woman committing fornication, against her husband. Mostly in the Old Testament, it's used of Israel, because Israel was considered God's wife.

And when they worshipped idols, they were often referred to as a cheating wife, harlot. And that's a common image for Jerusalem and for Israel in the prophets. It's less common to find it used of pagan nations.

Behold, I'm against you, says the Lord of hosts. I will lift your skirts over your face, still using the imagery of a harlot. You know, she's going to be humiliated, stripped bare, exposed publicly.

I will show the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your shame. I will cast abominable filth upon you, make you vile, and make you a spectacle. So he's basically saying that Assyria is going to be so humiliated that it's like a harlot who's been exposed and stripped naked and people thrown manure on her and things like that to give her public shame.

Says it should 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? Are you better than Noah Amon? That's Thebes. That was situated by the river that had the waters around her whose rampart was like the sea, whose wall was like the sea.

That is their wall was so impenetrable it would be like trying to, it would be like having a moat the size of the sea around you. In other words, they seemed, you know, indestructible. They seemed unconquerable, but they were conquered by Assyria.

He says Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength. That is when Thebes was under siege from Assyria, they sent messengers to Egypt and to Ethiopia hoping for their assistance, but did not receive sufficient assistance. It was boundless.

Put and Lubin were her helpers. Other North African countries that were, didn't really provide much help, but they were her confederates. Thebes.

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 the great men were bound in chains. Now here's a sort of an allusion to how cruel the Assyrians were. This time the Assyrians conquered Thebes.

Now they dashed the children's heads against stones and things like that. You might remember from Psalm 137 that there's a lament written by the Jews in Babylonian captivity and there's a very disturbing line in there. I think the last line of the Psalm says, blessed is he or happy as he who dashes your children's heads against the stones or something like that.

This is something that ancient nations did. I mean again Babylon had done it to Israel. The Assyrians did it to Thebes.

And I mean just, this is before there was a Geneva Convention, before there were war crimes identified as not to be done. Pagan wars were much more gruesome, much more conscienceless than modern wars typically have been. Although we have some pretty bad stuff going in modern wars too.

But generally speaking most I think most invaders do not look for ways to be cruel to babies and so forth. Though they might because they don't want to grow up to be you know enemy warriors either. He said that the head of every street, verse 10, the honorable men and her great men were bound in chains.

You also will be drunk, you'll be hidden, you also will seek refuge from the enemy. Being drunk has been mentioned earlier. This is an image used in certain prophets, Jeremiah 25 in particular.

Getting drunk has to do with being basically so terrified, so immobilized, so petrified, so I don't know, so disoriented from in a time of war that you don't have any more sense or any more control than a bumbling, stumbling drunkard. And so to be drunk in some of these contexts of judgment, again Jeremiah 25 is one where that comes up a lot, is basically a result of judgment. They're not really drunk with wine, they're drunk with the fury of God and they're stumbling around out of control.

And your strongholds are fig trees with ripened figs. If they are shaken they fall into the mouth of the eater. Now it's saying that you are like a fig tree that anyone can shake it and the figs are so ripe to fall that they'll fall right into their mouths.

In other words Assyria has become so ripe for judgment that it's going to be easy pickings for the invaders. God is bringing the invaders to consume them as it were and we'll find it very easy to do the idea here because they're ripe for judgment. 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. The statement surely your people in your midst are women could possibly mean that the men of the city have been so wiped out in war that there's not many men left.

It's mainly a population of women but more likely it means that the men in the city are no more useful in battle and defending the city than women are. And while you know our

modern military actually has women in ancient times and even in our earlier lifetime they didn't really have women in combat in wartime because let's face it although it's politically incorrect so women usually are not as strong as men. There are some women stronger than some men but generally speaking men are the ones who are muscular and aggressive and you know cruel and capable of fighting and killing other people.

Women generally speaking were more nurturing and they were not you know trained in war. They weren't considered to be they didn't do a man's job and war was a man's job. So I think it's saying that the men are like women.

It's referring to them as they are women in the sense that they're no more useful in defending the city against the invaders than if they were in fact literally women. Draw your water for the siege verse 14. Fortify your strongholds go into the clay and tread the mortar make strong brick kiln.

This is again like he said earlier telling them to defend themselves the best they can. I think chapter 2 verse 1 said similar things. You know go ahead Nineveh do your best to defend yourself see if you can see how that works out for you.

You know draw your water for the siege means store up water inside the wall of city so during a siege you won't die of lack of water which is of course one of the things that caused many cities to surrender to invaders because they just they wouldn't have any water after a while they use it up. So he's referring to that. Verse 15.

There the fire will devour you the sword will cut you off it will eat you up like a locust. Make yourselves many like the locust. Make yourselves many like the swarming locust.

You have multiplied your merchants more than the stars of heaven. The locust plunders and flies away. Your commanders are like swarming locusts and your captains like great grasshoppers which camp in the hedges on the cold day but when the sun rises they flee away and the place where they are is not known.

Now what this is doing likening actually the Assyrians to locusts. This can be a very terrifying thing to their enemies when a locust plague is coming any agrarian society that sees it coming is just terrified there's absolutely nothing you can do to stop a locust plague you just have to endure it until they've eaten all they want and move along and the Assyrian armies in their height of power were like that when the when a nation saw the Assyrians coming down oh man there's no way we can resist these people they're numerous as locusts they're uh we're just going to be destroyed and and so Assyria had that reputation uh among the nations they attacked that oh man it's like locusts coming but what he says is yeah but the locust plagues they're temporary uh they they camp in the nighttime in the hedges and then in the morning they flee away and they're gone no one knows where they went in other words you guys were once like a locust plague but now you're like you've moved on you know you no one knows no one will be able to

find you no one will know where you went you know it's interesting that when Nineveh fell and Nineveh was you know the great powerful city of the region like New York City or something like that of its day when it fell it it was totally uh removed I don't I guess it got covered with sand or something but like 200 years after Nineveh fell Xenophon was traveling through that area and he he didn't even know what city had been just two centuries later I mean it was one of the great greatest cities in the world in its day and two centuries later there were the ruins of a city that Xenophon found and uh he couldn't identify it he didn't know what city had been and later when Alexander the Great came through there and I think it was 331 BC he didn't even know a city was there I mean it was apparently so covered over with sand he he never knew that there had been a city and yet it was one of the most significant cities in its day uh so it really had been like no one knew where it was no one knew where it went it just disappeared it's hard to imagine that I mean it's like watching the original Planet of the Apes you know where uh you know at the very end he sees the Statue of Liberty's arm sticking up and uh it says oh this used to be New York you know but it's like totally not New York anywhere there's no indication that it was ever there that the city was even there except for that one uh artifact that's that he finds in the end of the movie it's like it's hard to imagine that these great cities of the world right now London or New York or any great city that within a few hundred years of its being destroyed could just be it vanished you know and uh it's just hard to imagine anything to be so thoroughly covered up but Nineveh was and it's like a plague plague of locusts that came and went and no one knows where they went their place where they are now is who knows where they are verse 18 your shepherds slumber O king of Assyria your nobles rest in the dust meaning they're dead your people are scattered on the mountains and no one gathers them your injury has no healing just a way of saying it'll never be restored again they can't recover from this your wound is severe all who hear news of you will clap their hands over you for upon whom has your wickedness passed and not passed continually so he's saying you're not going to be sympathizers you know you're going to suffer a horrible humiliating defeat and you know all the glory of your former empires not going to be there you know evidence of it and there won't be anyone mourning your loss your death everyone around you you were their enemy you know they they suffered at your hands they're all going to clap their hands and celebrate your your demise which is a I mean sort of a something to make you feel a little uh it's a further turning of the knife you know I mean it's bad enough that we get terribly wiped out and and die as a society worse yet we didn't have any friends to attend the funeral or no friends to mourn our passing um and so that is true I mean no one did mourn the passing of Assyria and so that's the the bleak story of the destruction of Assyria by Naem