



THE BOOK OF NAHUM

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INTRODUCTION

Whilst Jeremiah and Zephaniah were preaching judgment against Judah, the prophet Nahum was preaching judgment against Nineveh, who were one of Judah's enemies.

The northern kingdom of Israel was already in Assyrian captivity, and Assyria itself was still a world-dominating power. And so, Nahum preaches a very straightforward message, which is, 'the fall of Nineveh'.

Most commentators date his message to around 630-612 B.C. This is because in Nahum 3:8, he mentions Thebes, which is in Egypt, and we know that Thebes was destroyed around 663 B.C. by Ashurbanipal. You will notice that when Nahum speaks about Thebes, he writes about it in the past tense.

In other words, it's already been destroyed, and so, he uses their example as a warning for the Assyrians. We also know that Nineveh itself was destroyed in 612 B.C., and you will notice that Nahum writes about it in the future tense.

NAHUM

The name Nahum means, 'God consoles,' or 'comforter,' which in a sense is very appropriate. Yes, it was bad news for Assyria, but his message was intended to bring comfort to all those who were oppressed and afflicted by them, the people of Judah.

We also know that he was a prophet from Elkosh, which is situated in Galilee; we know that he died at the age of forty-five and was buried in his native land. Other than that information, we know nothing else about Nahum.

BACKGROUND

Back in Genesis 10:12-22, it tells us about Assyria, but during the time of writing, the Assyrians had become the world power of the day. Historians tell us that they were the cruellest and most brutal nation around at the time. There have been many inscriptions found that boast about a lot of kings who filled lands with the bodies of dead people and how they killed so many soldiers. In these inscriptions, you can clearly see that they tossed their enemies aside like lumps of clay. They had pyramids, which were made from human heads.

The kings cut off people's hands and nailed them to the wall; they fed dead bodies to the wild dogs. and used human flesh to cover their walls. Historians tell us that Ashurbanipal enjoyed ripping off people's lips. G. L. Robinson. The Minor Prophets.

As with most world powers, they got to the stage where they thought they were invincible, especially the capital city of Nineveh. The city was surrounded on three sides by water and was built on top of the Tigris River waterway.

The walls were seven and a half miles in circumference and were thick enough for three chariots to go along, side by side. It was Professor Layard in 1845 who discovered the ancient ruins of Nineveh, now in Iraq.

We mustn't lose sight of the fact that God actually cared for the Assyrians, God actually used the Assyrians to correct His own people, Isaiah 10:15. At one time, they actually repented of their ways, Jonah 3, and slowly but surely, they fell back to their old ways.

The book itself is written like a poem or psalm, and when we read through it, we see a great battleground between Assyria and God. The message in the book is for and all about Assyria.

OUTLINE

God's Majesty. Nahum 1
The City Falling. Nahum 2
The Cause Of Its Fall. Nahum 3

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

‘A prophecy concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. Nahum 1:1

There's no doubt that Nahum's message was concerning; it's all about doom and gloom for Nineveh, and God was using His prophet to deliver His message. The KJV begins with the words, ‘The burden of Nineveh,’ which carries with it the idea of a heavy load.

It's the idea that Nineveh's sins have now become such a heavy load that God will no longer allow the city to stand. No other prophecy is called a book.

Gill, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is called ‘the book of the vision’; what it contains being made known to him by the Lord in a vision, as was common; hence the prophets are called seers.’

THE LORD'S ANGER AGAINST NINEVEH

‘The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and vents his wrath against his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger but great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and dries it up; he makes all the rivers run dry. Bashan and Carmel wither, and the blossoms of Lebanon fade. The mountains quake before him, and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it. Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; the rocks are shattered before him.’ Nahum 1:2-6

Note that ‘Yahweh’ is mentioned five times in two verses, Nahum 1:2-3. ‘The LORD is jealous’ Nahum 1:2, in the sense that He doesn't want to compete with those imaginary gods, who people have created in their own minds so that they can fulfil their own desires, Exodus 20:5 / Exodus 34:14 / Deuteronomy 4:24 / Deuteronomy 5:9 / Deuteronomy 6:15.

People today still want to worship the created instead of the Creator, Romans 1:25, but if we want to know God and His Word, then we must read His Word and closely listen to what He says.

God is the One who is filled with wrath and is going to take vengeance against the Assyrians, [Nahum 1:2](#) / [Romans 12:19](#). Yes, He used them to discipline His own people, the Northern Kingdom, at one time, [Habakkuk 1:12-2:1](#). The problem was, the Assyrians just saw this as another group of people whom they could destroy.

The other problem was that God was going to use Israel to bring about the Saviour of the world, and so, He was now going to punish Assyria because of the way they treated His people, and still be able to bring the Messiah through Israel.

Oh, if only we could be as slow to anger as God is! God wasn't acting out of impulse; He's been slow to anger, [Nahum 1:3](#). He's been patient with the Assyrians, He's been patient to bring out His eternal plans and purpose with His people, [2 Peter 3:9](#).

Just because He's patient doesn't mean He becomes powerless. When God decided to act, He did so with His eternal plan in mind, [Romans 2:3-5](#). Here, He's working in the affairs of the Assyrian nation.

And make no mistake about it, He won't allow the guilty to go unpunished, [Nahum 1:3](#). When God decides to pour out His wrath upon His enemies, His enemies will suffer the consequences, and there's no escaping His judgment, [Hebrews 9:27-28](#).

Nahum pulls no punches here as He glorifies God's power to avenge. The Assyrians had pride in themselves and thought they were invincible. So, they are being reminded that Someone is stronger than they are, and it's Him who is and has control.

They're dealing with a God who has power over nature, [Nahum 1:3](#). He had rebuked the seas, [Exodus 14:21](#) / [Joshua 3:16](#), and the earth trembles at His presence, [Nahum 1:4](#) / [Exodus 19:18](#).

Bashan and Carmel were beautiful, Lebanon was known for strong trees, but Nahum speaks of it as being a wilderness, and it's all God's doing, [Nahum 1:4](#). The mountains quake, the hills melt away, and the earth, the world and all who live in the world tremble at His presence, [Nahum 1:5](#).

Nahum asks two rhetorical questions to which the answer is no one, [Nahum 1:6](#) / [Nahum 2:11](#) / [Nahum 3:7-8](#), His wrath is compared to fire, and it's so hot even the rocks shatter, [Nahum 1:6](#) / [1 Kings 19:11](#).

In other words, no one can withstand His power. God was bringing destruction on them, [Isaiah 10:5-19](#). Later, we'll read that this is exactly how they treated others, [Nahum 3:10](#), and so, now it's time to reap what they have sown. We know that Nineveh was guilty because God says so on many occasions throughout this book.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'The guilty', are the ones God knows to be guilty, [Nahum 1:3](#). God's enemies', are those who have revolted from him, [Nahum 1:8](#). 'Plotters of evil', are those who plan and execute evil, [Nahum 1:9](#) / [Nahum 1:11](#). The vile', are they who have sunken into bestiality, [Nahum 1:14](#). 'The wicked,' are the vicious and reprobate, [Nahum 1:15](#). 'The plunderers', are the cruel, heartless spoilers, [Nahum 2:2](#). 'The dishonest,' are the covenant breakers and thieves, [Nahum 3:1](#). The rapacious,' are destroyers and exploiters of the innocent, [Nahum 3:1](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, continues and says the following.

'The insatiable seekers of gain' are grabbers and graspers, [Nahum 3:1](#). 'The harlots' are the pagans, the sensualists, those who will prostitute anything for wicked purposes, [Nahum 3:4](#). The betrayers of weaker nations.' [Nahum 3:4](#) are the traitors, double-crossers, and deceitful liars. 'The despicable' are all of those mentioned above, plus any others of similar character, [Nahum 3:5-7](#). 'The presumptuous', are they who revel in the conceit that God will not punish them, [Nahum 3:8](#). 'The disseminators of evil', are all of those who form a part of the cancer of wickedness eating at the vitals of the human race, [Nahum 3:19](#).'

'The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him, but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh; he will pursue his foes into the realm of darkness.' Nahum 1:7-8

Amidst all the doom and doom, there is a message of hope for the individual, it's a message of mercy. God is good, and He is a refuge for His people in times of trouble, [Nahum 1:7](#) / [Psalms 27:1](#) / [Psalms 37:39](#) / [Psalms 43:2](#) / [Psalms 52:7](#).

God really does care for those who put their trust in Him, [Nahum 1:7](#). If Nahum's message was heard by the Jews, this would certainly be reminding them not to worry because God always takes care of His own, [Romans 8:28](#). He knows those who trust Him and those who don't, [John 10:27](#).

The reference to 'an overwhelming flood', [Nahum 1:8](#), could be relating to one of two things.

1. It could relate to the time when Sennacherib's army surrounded Jerusalem and tried to conquer the city.

It was during this time that one hundred and eighty-five thousand of his soldiers died, [2 Kings 19:35](#), and so his plans to conquer the city came to a rapid end, [Nahum 2:5-7](#) / [Isaiah 37:33-34](#).

2. Another possibility, and probably more accurate, is that it's a reference to the wave of armies that were led by the Babylonians that brought an end to Nineveh in 612 B.C.

In all of this, we must remember that Nineveh was the world's powerhouse; they were filled with themselves, brutal towards their enemies and thought nobody could bring them down.

The Israelites, on the other hand, were a very small nation and would have had absolutely no chance against them, but God was with them, and if anyone could and would wipe them off the face of the planet, it was Him.

Notice God will pursue His foes into the realm of darkness, [Nahum 1:8](#). When we're up against the God of the universe, we can be sure there is no hiding place, [Psalm 139:7-8](#), nowhere to run from His wrath, [Jeremiah 23:24](#). Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Lord is angry with those who abuse others, especially those who abuse His people, and He will punish them. This section stresses the justice, power, and goodness of Yahweh.'

The rest of this chapter basically says to Nineveh, You had your first warning from Jonah, and although you repented, after a time, you turned back to your old ways, and now it's time for judgment.

'Whatever they plot against the LORD he will bring to an end; trouble will not come a second time. They will be entangled among thorns and drunk from their wine; they will be consumed like dry stubble. From you, Nineveh, has one come forth who plots evil against the LORD and devises wicked plans.' [Nahum 1:9-11](#)

Nahum's message to the Ninevites is getting more personal for them. They obviously thought they could change their ways like they did the first time; they thought that it would happen again, but that simply wasn't going to happen, [Nahum 1:9](#). God's judgement is coming, and there's nothing they can do to stop it from happening. The Ninevites have absolutely no chance of escaping God's wrath, despite their thinking life will go on as normal, [Nahum 1:10](#) / [Jeremiah 13:9](#) / [Jeremiah 13:13-14](#) / [Habakkuk 2:5](#). Despite their strength and their fortified city and walls, God will burn them up like dry stubble, [Nahum 1:10](#) / [Nahum 1:6](#).

Who is the one who will come forth? [Nahum 1:11](#). Most commentators believe this to be Sennacherib, who wanted to conquer Jerusalem, and that's simply because the Assyrians saw him as the most powerful king they had. When Sennacherib wanted to destroy Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah, [Isaiah 36:16-20](#).

God's power over the Assyrian army was too much for them, and it only took one angel to kill one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians in one night, [2 Kings 19:35](#). What happened back then was going to happen again to the Assyrians; God will judge them.

'This is what the LORD says: 'Although they have allies and are numerous, they will be destroyed and pass away. Although I have afflicted you, Judah, I will afflict you no more. Now I will break their yoke from your neck and tear your shackles away.' [Nahum 1:12-13](#)

Here again, we find a message of hope for Judah; the Assyrians, despite their large numbers, will be destroyed, and they will pass away, Nahum 1:12. 2 Kings 18:29-35 tells us that when God passed through the enemy's camp, He destroyed them.

Yes, the Israelites would be taken into captivity as slaves, but God, over a period of time, will destroy their captors, Nahum 1:13. The Assyrians won't be able to control them any longer.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Lord promised to break Assyria's oppression of the Israelites, as when someone removed a yoke from the neck of an ox or the chains that bound a prisoner. For years, the Israelites had to endure Assyrian oppression, including invasion, occupation, and taxation, 2 Kings 19:20-37 / 2 Chronicles 32:1-23 / Isaiah 37:27-38.’

‘The LORD has given a command concerning you, Nineveh: ‘You will have no descendants to bear your name. I will destroy the images and idols that are in the temple of your gods. I will prepare your grave, for you are vile.’ Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, Judah, and fulfil your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed.’ Nahum 1:14-15

Although Nineveh was a great city, its end was coming, as God is going to destroy the city, its inhabitants, the images, idols and their temples, Nahum 1:14. He basically tells them I'm going to be your undertaker; I'm going to the One who will bury you, Nahum 1:14.

When they look on the mountains, they will see the one whose feet bring good news and he will be proclaiming peace, Nahum 1:15. There's no doubt that there was good news being proclaimed when Sennacherib's army was destroyed, 2 Kings 18, but here, God is speaking about the destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C, Nahum 1:15.

Johnson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘So complete was its (Nineveh's) destruction that when Xenophon passed by the site about 200 years later, he thought the mounds were the ruins of some other city. And Alexander the Great, fighting in a battle nearby, did not realise that he was near the ruins of Nineveh.’

It will be time to rejoice when the good news about Nineveh's fall spreads, for Judah, it was time to get back to following God and fully committing to His commands.

Paul speaks about the good news in Romans 10:15, and we find Paul quoting Isaiah 52:17 and Isaiah 40:52, which is the text from which Nahum is quoting. When Paul quotes this good news, he uses it to speak of our spiritual deliverance from Satan by Jesus, which really is the Gospel, the good news.

When the one who brings good news and proclaims peace comes, it will be time for Judah to celebrate their festivals and a time to fulfil their vows, Nahum 1:15. Even today, when world leaders who are dictators fall in war, the whole world celebrates as another ruthless leader becomes no more. In other words, God is stronger than His enemies, and they will lose; God will be doing it all through Babylon, Nahum 1:15 / 2 Kings 23:29-35.

APPLICATION

There's good news to be found in the fact that God cares for His people, especially from those who oppose His children. God loves us and knows us, Ephesians 2:4-7. He knows what's going on all around us, but more importantly, He is in control, 1 Timothy 1:17.

Nineveh once repented, Jonah 3:6-10, but went back to their old ways, and although God was patient with them, His patience finally ran out. We must remember that God's grace won't last forever; we must act now in order to be saved, 2 Corinthians 6:2.

However, we too, like the Assyrians, must be careful not to let our pride get the better of us, James 4:6-7. There are times when we're tempted to become self-sufficient when we look to ourselves for strength and wisdom, but this is a big mistake, Revelation 3:17.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

‘An attacker advances against you, Nineveh. Guard the fortress, watch the road, brace yourselves, marshal all your strength! The LORD will restore the splendour of Jacob like the splendour of Israel, though destroyers have laid them waste and have ruined their vines.’ Nahum 2:1-2

NINEVEH TO FALL

This chapter describes the impending doom of Nineveh; it's time for them to prepare for the upcoming onslaught. There's nowhere to hide from God's judgement, there's nothing they can do to stop God from pouring out His wrath against them.

An attacker is seen as advancing against Nineveh, and Nineveh is told to guard the fortress, watch the road, brace themselves, and marshal all their strength! Nahum 2:1.

Nineveh finally fell when Nabopolassar gathered a group of armies together, from the Medes, Babylonians, and the Scythians. It was he who went against the city in 612 B.C.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, in their commentary, say the following.

‘Although applicable to another situation, Jeremiah's understanding that God was the Executioner and that the armies of men were merely his instruments certainly sheds light upon the similar situation here. Jamieson also identified God as the Breaker, and the armies as his ‘battle-axe,’ Jeremiah 51:20-21.’

Notice the hope for Jacob, God is going to restore Jacob's splendour, like the splendour of Israel, despite the destroyers who have come and laid them waste and ruined their vines, Nahum 1:2 / Psalms 80:8-16 / Isaiah 5:1-7.

Keil, in his commentary, says the following concerning Jacob and Israel, Nahum 1:2.

‘Both names stand here for the whole of Israel (of the twelve tribes); and as Cyril has shown, the distinction is this: Jacob is the natural name which the people inherited from their forefather, and Israel the spiritual name which they received from God.’

Notice also how Nahum writes as though it's already happened; in other words, God is as good as His Word. The fall of Nineveh was significant because it meant that the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which was in Assyrian captivity, would soon be freed.

‘The shields of the soldiers are red; the warriors are clad in scarlet. The metal on the chariots flashes on the day they are made ready; the spears of juniper are brandished. The chariots storm through the streets, rushing back and forth through the squares. They look like flaming torches; they dart about like lightning.’ Nahum 2:3-4

This is not good news for the Assyrians; they are going to reap what they sowed, Galatians 6:7. All the cruelty and havoc they created among other nations was going to happen to them. The shields of those who were to slaughter them were red from the blood they had shed in other battles and the people they had killed, Nahum 2:3.

The metal on the chariots was brightly polished in order to reflect the sun, which would blind the enemy. Nahum 2:3. These chariots would have had blades sticking out of their wheels, which meant they would run through the streets of the city, causing destruction and slaughter, Nahum 2:4.

‘Nineveh summons her picked troops, yet they stumble on their way. They dash to the city wall; the protective shield is put in place. The river gates are thrown open, and the palace collapses. It is decreed that Nineveh be exiled and carried away. Her female slaves moan like doves and beat on their breasts.’ Nahum 2:5-7

Nineveh is going to be taken by surprise, which causes them to stumble, Nahum 2:5. The joint armies of Medo-Persians and Babylonians went straight for the walls of the capital city, Nahum 2:5. We can imagine enormous battering rams being set up against the huge walls.

The river gates of the city were diverted so that they could get to the walls, Nahum 2:6, and the water pressure would be so great that it could burst a hole in the city wall. No wonder the ‘female slaves moan like doves and beat their breasts’, Nahum 2:7. The KJV says ‘that Huzzab will be led away captive.’

Smith, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The probability that the goddess of Nineveh is referred to here is certainly greater than that it is the queen. The latter played no conspicuous part in Assyrian history, but the goddess occupied a very large part in the minds of Assyrian monarchs. If it is the goddess, the maidens are probably the female devotees of Ishtar (the sacred prostitutes).’

They are now sowing what they have reaped for years. They now realise that it’s futile to rely on their strength; the city walls have fallen, and with it went their security.

‘Nineveh is like a pool whose water is draining away. ‘Stop! Stop!’ they cry, but no one turns back. Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! The supply is endless, the wealth from all its treasures! She is pillaged, plundered, stripped! Hearts melt, knees give way, bodies tremble, every face grows pale.’ Nahum 2:8-10

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Nineveh was like a pool of water fed by many streams, in that her citizens came from every land, being drawn to the city, not for patriotic or benign purposes, but solely for commercial greed and the pursuit of wealth. None of the peoples, or at least very few of them, felt any loyalty whatever to the city.’

Although it’s not been proven, there are those who believe that a great rainstorm happened two months before, which actually washed away a huge portion of the city’s wall, Nahum 1:8. If this did happen, then this would give us one possibility of how Nabopolassar managed to take the city.

God had just told them exactly how the city would fall, the river gates would fall open, and the city would collapse, and as a result, the victorious army would take the spoils of war.

Even though those in command would cry out orders to their soldiers, to stand and fight, no one would, no one would even look back, as they were too busy running away in order to save themselves from being murdered, Nahum 2:8.

All the items which the Assyrians plundered from other nations were now being taken away from them, Nahum 2:9 / Psalms 39:6. Notice their hearts melt, their knees give way, their bodies tremble, and every face grows pale, Nahum 2:10. This is sheer terror. They were truly reaping what they had sown, Galatians 6:7.

When Nineveh was finally destroyed, we know that a few of the Assyrian soldiers fled to Carchemish. It was there in 609 B.C. that the Babylonians made a final attack against the Assyrians and the Egyptians, who fought together. After the Babylonians defeated them both, this brought an end to their alliance and the end of the Assyrian empire.

‘Where now is the lion’s den, the place where they fed their young, where the lion and lioness went, and the cubs, with nothing to fear? The lion killed enough for his cubs and strangled the prey for his mate, filling his lairs with the kill and his dens with the prey. ‘I am against you,’ declares the LORD Almighty. ‘I will burn up your chariots in smoke, and the sword will devour your young lions. I will leave you no prey on the earth. The voices of your messengers will no longer be heard.’ Nahum 2:11-13

Just as Rome had the sign of the eagle, Assyria had the sign of a lion, [Nahum 2:11](#).

Johnson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Assyrian kings prided themselves on their ability to kill lions in lion hunts. And the kings likened their own ferocity and fearlessness to that of lions. For example, Sennacherib boasted of his military fury by saying, ‘Like a lion I raged.’ Lions were frequently pictured in Assyrian reliefs and decorations.’

They thought their source of power was in their chariots, but with them gone, they will have no power, [Nahum 2:11](#). When the Assyrians went out against other nations, they would bring back the captives to the people who would taunt them, scoff at them, and make a laughingstock out of them, [Nahum 2:12](#).

God is against them and promises to burn their chariots and kill their young lions, [Nahum 1:13](#). The young lions are the children, [Nahum 2:13](#), and they will be devoured; there will be no prey on earth, [Nahum 2:13](#) / [Nahum 2:1](#), which means there will be no food for them.

Dalglish, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The lion’s den, the cave, represents Nineveh; the predatory raids suggested the multiplied spoils seized from the conquered nations; the abundant prey stored in the lair suggests the insatiability of Assyria; the lion and whelps point to Assyria’s nobles and citizens.’

Nineveh has fallen, the Assyrians have fallen, and so, the Assyrians are certainly going to feel the effect; there would be a feeling of hopelessness and helplessness. This is exactly how they made other nations feel, but now it’s time for them to reap what they have sown, [Galatians 6:7](#) / [Matthew 26:52](#).

APPLICATION

Although Nineveh had received mercy from God in the past in the days of Jonah, [Jonah 4:1-11](#), the time for receiving more mercy from God was over for the Assyrians. They continued to practice evil wherever they went, and now it was time for judgment; it was time for them to be on the receiving end of God’s wrath.

As Christians, we need to remind ourselves of the mercy we received from God, and we must be quick to show that mercy to others, especially to those who hurt us, [Luke 6:36-42](#).

When we sin, we must do what the Ninevites did in the days of Jonah: we must repent, [Jonah 3:6-10](#); we must confess our sins to God, otherwise, no forgiveness will be granted to us, [1 John 1:9](#).

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

‘Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims! The crack of whips, the clatter of wheels, galloping horses and jolting chariots! Charging cavalry, flashing swords, and glittering spears! Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses—all because of the wanton lust of a prostitute, alluring, the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft.’ Nahum 3:1-4

WOE TO NINEVEH

We can hear the cries, This isn’t fair! This is unjust! But, oh how wrong Nineveh was, this judgement was fully deserved and delivered by a very just God. This chapter tells us why God brought judgment upon them. The city is a city of blood; the Assyrians have brutally murdered many people, and so they have blood on their hands. [Nahum 3:1](#). Now it’s time to reap what they have sown, what they did to others, God was going to bring upon them. There’s no escaping the fact that the Assyrians were evil and caused havoc wherever they went, as described in [Nahum 3:2-3](#). All they wanted to do was go to other nations, destroy them and take the spoils for themselves.

Ashurbanipal II had a fearsome reputation; he was well known for skinning some leaders alive, and then he would use the skin to cover pillars and walls. He loved nothing more than to cut off the heads of some people and publicly display them on the top of poles.

Deane, in his commentary, says the following.

‘On their monuments, we may see prisoners impaled alive, flayed, beheaded, dragged to death with ropes passed through rings in their lips, blinded by the king’s own hand, hung up by hands or feet to die in slow torture. Others had their brains beaten out, their tongues torn out by the roots, while the bleeding heads of the slain were tied round the necks of the living who were reserved for further torture. The royal inscriptions boast with exultation of the number of enemies slain, and of captives carried away, and of cities levelled with the ground.’

They used all kinds of tactics to ensnare other nations, including prostituting, sorcery, and witchcraft, [Nahum 3:4](#) / [2 Kings 18:31](#). Now we begin to understand why God poured out His wrath upon these people; they were brutal and ruthless in the way they treated other nations.

‘I am against you,’ declares the LORD Almighty. ‘I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your shame. I will pelt you with filth, I will treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle. All who see you will flee from you and say, ‘Nineveh is in ruins—who will mourn for her?’ Where can I find anyone to comfort you?’ Nahum 3:5-7

We can almost feel the embarrassment and shame Nineveh is going to face before the whole world. God is going to lift their skirts over their face and show the nations their nakedness and the kingdoms their shame, [Nahum 3:5](#) / [Isaiah 47:1-3](#) / [Jeremiah 13:26-27](#) / [Ezekiel 16:37](#) / [Hosea 2:3-5](#) / [Revelation 17:15-16](#).

He is going to pelt them with filth, treat them with contempt and make them a spectacle, [Nahum 3:6](#).

Smith, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This seems to have been a part of the punishment for fornication and adultery, [Jeremiah 13:22](#) / [Jeremiah 13:26](#) / [Ezekiel 16:36](#) / [Hosea 2:8-9](#).’

Nineveh had played the part of a prostitute for years before the nations, and so, it will suffer the shame of a prostitute, [Ezekiel 16:37-39](#) / [Hosea 2:3](#). It’s not surprising that no other nation would feel sorry for them or comfort them when they were destroyed, [Nahum 3:7](#), because those other nations would remember the way they were treated by them.

‘Are you better than Thebes, situated on the Nile, with water around her? The river was her defence, the waters her wall. Cush and Egypt were her boundless strength; Put and Libya were among her allies. Yet she was taken captive and went into exile. Her infants were dashed to pieces at every street corner. Lots were cast for her nobles, and all her great men were put in chains. You too will become drunk; you will go into hiding and seek refuge from the enemy.’

Nahum 3:8-11

Judgement and destruction are inevitable; it’s going to happen, and there’s no way back for Nineveh. Although Thebes, [Nahum 3:8](#), was the capital of Egypt and heavily populated, it was conquered by Ashurbanipal.

Watts, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Nahum did not interpret the fall of Thebes as a sign of Assyrian power, but as a symbol of what must happen to any nation that is against God.’

The River Nile was everything to the Egyptians, their whole lives centred around the Nile for religious, domestic and military reasons, [Nahum 3:8](#). The Nile didn’t help the Egyptians when the Assyrians came against them, and so the River Tigris wouldn’t help the Ninevites. If anything, it would actually be the River Tigris, which would begin the process of bringing down this great city.

Here again, we’re reminded of the reaping what you sow process. Thebes was a powerful city, but it was brought down by Ashurbanipal, despite its boundless strength, despite Put and Libya being allies, [Nahum 3:9](#).

Despite their power and alliances, they were taken captive and went into exile, [Nahum 3:10](#). Her infants were dashed to pieces at every street corner, [Hosea 13:16](#); lots were cast for her nobles, and all her great men were put in chains, [Nahum 3:10](#).

Nineveh was a powerful city, and God is going to bring it down. Ashurbanipal took a whole load of treasures from Thebes, and so a whole load of treasures will be taken from Nineveh.

The reference to ‘becoming drunk’, [Nahum 3:11](#) / [Nahum 1:10](#), means they will be in total confusion; they will be shocked and bewildered trying to find a safe place to hide. It’s almost like God is mocking the Ninevites; it’s like God is saying, ‘Oh, how powerful you thought you were, but you didn’t think about how powerful I am.’

‘All your fortresses are like fig trees with their first ripe fruit; when they are shaken, the figs fall into the mouth of the eater. Look at your troops—they are all weaklings. The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies; fire has consumed the bars of your gates. Draw water for the siege, strengthen your defences! Work the clay, tread the mortar, repair the brickwork! There the fire will consume you; the sword will cut you down—they will devour you like a swarm of locusts. Multiply like grasshoppers, multiply like locusts! You have increased the number of your merchants till they are more numerous than the stars in the sky, but like locusts, they strip the land and then fly away. Your guards are like locusts, your officials like swarms of locusts that settle in the walls on a cold day—but when the sun appears, they fly away, and no one knows where.’ Nahum 3:12-17

He tells them first of all that all the fortresses of Nineveh weren’t powerful enough to stand against God, as they fell very easily, [Nahum 3:12](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘First-ripe figs, when at full maturity, fall from the tree with the least shake; so, at the first shake or consternation, all the fortresses of Nineveh were abandoned; and the king, in despair, burnt himself and household in his own palace.’

Then He tells them that those who live in Nineveh will be overcome with terror as helpless women, [Nahum 3:13](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Ninevites would prove to be as defenceless, vulnerable, and fearful as women, in contrast to lion-like soldiers, [Isaiah 19:16](#) / [Jeremiah 50:37](#) / [Jeremiah 51:30](#). Their gates would be so weak that they could have been left open rather than bolted shut because fire would consume them, [Isaiah 10:16-17](#).’

God tells them to draw water for the siege, strengthen their defences, work the clay, tread the mortar, and repair the brickwork! [Nahum 3:14](#). In other words, God tells them to get ready for the coming onslaught and do everything they can to defend themselves from the oncoming Babylonian army.

Sadly, this too would be a waste of time; nothing they do will stop them as fire will consume them, the sword will cut them down, and they will devour them like a swarm of locusts, [Nahum 3:15](#) / [Joel 1:2-13](#).

God asks them to increase their army, like grasshoppers, as many as locusts, [Nahum 3:15](#). They had increased the number of their merchants so much they couldn't be counted, but like locusts they strip the land and then fly away, [Nahum 3:16](#).

Their guards are like locusts, their officials are like swarms of locusts that settle in the walls on a cold day, but when the sun appears, they fly away, and no one knows where, [Nahum 3:17](#). In other words, locusts don't function as an army; they hibernate in the winter.

The point is that no matter how many soldiers they could gather together to fight, they would have no chance against the army God was sending against them; all would be gone. As I mentioned earlier, those who ran away from Nineveh went to Carchemish, but they were chased and killed by the Babylonians.

‘King of Assyria, your shepherds slumber; your nobles lie down to rest. Your people are scattered on the mountains with no one to gather them. Nothing can heal you; your wound is fatal. All who hear the news about you clap their hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?’ [Nahum 3:18-19](#)

Notice that the king's shepherds are asleep, [Nahum 3:18](#). How could they be sleeping knowing what was going on! They should be awake and fully aware of what's happening, [Isaiah 5:26-27](#). There are some commentators who suggest that they weren't asleep but rather already dead.

Smith, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The thought that ‘they slumber and take their ease’ is not in the passage. ‘Sleep’ here must be taken in the sense of death.’

Because of the way they treated others, it seems that the other nations loved to hate the Assyrians, as no one would mourn over them when their empire finally came to an end, [Nahum 3:18](#). The only rejoicing which would happen is when the Assyrians finally fell, the other nations would rejoice greatly, [Nahum 3:19](#).

APPLICATION

As Christians, we are to expect persecution and trouble from those who oppose God and His church, [2 Timothy 3:12](#). But we must remain faithful to God, who promises to protect us and help us in our time of need, [Psalm 27:5](#). We need to leave those who oppose us in God's hands, [Luke 18:7-8](#), and trust that He will deal with them appropriately. The real question we need to ask ourselves is simply this: Are we relying on our own strength, or are we relying on God and His strength? [Psalm 18:2](#) / [Ephesians 6:10](#).

CONCLUSION

All the way through the Book of Nahum, we hear God speaking through him and saying that Assyria as a nation would be destroyed and would never rise again. We hear Him say that Assyria would reap what they sowed among the other nations, [Galatians 6:7-8](#).

Judgment came upon them as God said, they repented the first time through Jonah's preaching, Jonah 3:6-10, but as a result of going back to their old practices, they felt and experienced the wrath of God and ceased to be a nation.

Fraser, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The striking fulfilment of Nahum's prophecy in the disappearance of Nineveh from the face of the earth is a seal upon the abiding truth of his message. Here is no mere piece of antiquity, but a confirmed Word of God.’