

GOD'S JUDGMENT ON NINEVEH

TEXT: NAHUM 2:1-13

INTRODUCTION:

1. Two of the Minor Prophets deal with the city of Nineveh – Jonah and Nahum. There are many interesting contrasts between the two books.
 - Jonah emphasizes the mercy of God; whereas Nahum emphasizes the judgment of God.
 - Jonah emphasizes the repentance of Nineveh, and Nahum emphasizes the rebellion of Nineveh.
 - In the book of Jonah, the emphasis is on the prophet, but in the book of Nahum, the emphasis is on the prophecy.
 - In the book of Jonah, we see a disobedient prophet, and in the book of Nahum, we see an obedient prophet.
 - And, in the book of Jonah, we see an obedient nation, and in the book of Nahum, we see a disobedient nation.
 - In the book of Jonah, we see deliverance from water, and in the book of Nahum, we see destruction by water (2:6).
2. Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria. It was an ancient city, founded in the days of Nimrod. Micah 5:6 refers to Assyria as “the land of Nimrod.”
3. Nahum chapter 2 deals with God’s judgment upon Nineveh.
4. Genesis 10:10, 11 says that the beginning of Nimrod’s kingdom was “Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh...”
5. Chapter 2 begins with words of warning for King Sennacherib and the people of Assyria. “He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face” (2:1) refers to the armies of the Medes and the Babylonians.
6. The Assyrians thought that their capital city of Nineveh was impregnable, and so Nahum warned them to watch out, they were going to be destroyed.
7. In chapter 1, the LORD had already declared that Nineveh was to be destroyed (cf. 1:14, 15b; 2:13; 3:18, 19).
8. God had already decreed the destruction of Nineveh. Twice we read, “Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts...” (2:13; 3:5).
 1. NINEVEH IS INVADED
 2. NINEVEH IS SPOILED

3. NINEVEH IS MOCKED

I. NINEVEH IS INVADED

1. At one time, Assyria had been the instrument used by God to punish “the excellency of Jacob” (2:2). But now it was time for God to punish them.
2. The reference to Jacob and Israel indicates both the northern and southern kingdoms, both Israel and Judah (2:1).
3. “For the Lord hath turned away (or “turned back,” that is “restored”) the excellency of Jacob” (2:2) means that when Nineveh fell, God restored His people, whom the Assyrians had oppressed.

“The emptiers” (the Assyrians) have emptied them (Israel) out, and marred their vine branches” (2:2b), but now it was Nineveh’s turn to be emptied out.

Their shields of the invaders were made red with blood, and their chariots looked like flames of fire as they raced through the streets of Nineveh (2:3).

The valiant men were dressed in scarlet, the color of blood, which struck terror in the hearts of the people of Nineveh (2:3).

7. Verses 3-5 is a striking picture of the frantic disorder and chaos that prevailed when the fierce Babylonians and Medes raced into Nineveh in their chariots.
8. In the midst of this terrible onslaught, the king of Nineveh tried in vain to rally “his worthies” (2:5), but they were all drunk (cf. 1:10; 3:11, 12).
9. These drunken leaders stumbled to the city walls but the walls were not strong enough to hold back the enemy (2:5; 3:11-13).
10. Heavy rains caused the Tigris River to rise up and it caused a flood, which broke down the walls of Nineveh. The floodgates were opened, the walls washed out, the palace was dissolved, “and Huzzab shall be led away captive” (2:6, 7).
11. There seems to be some question as to the identity of “Huzzab.” Perhaps she was the queen of Nineveh.
12. Her maids led her away, crying “with the voice of doves,” beating upon their breasts in anguish. Two Scriptures come to mind: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7).
13. And, “The way of transgressors is hard” (Proverbs 13:15).

14. “But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water” (2:8), that is, with no ebb or flow, fenced in, stagnant, and corrupted. There were huge dams around the city and they should have provided protection, but “they shall flee away” (2:8).
15. Nineveh’s military leaders shouted, “Stand, stand,” but their commands were ignored. The people fled and did not “look back” (2:8).

II. NINEVEH IS SPOILED (2:9)

1. For many years, the Assyrians had been invading and looting all of the neighboring cities, and at this time Nineveh was very wealthy with all of the spoils.
2. But now it was Nineveh’s turn to be spoiled (2:9, 10). The Babylonians and the Medes took everything they could carry, and Nineveh became “empty, and void, and waste” (2:10).
3. After the invasion, Nineveh was sparsely populated and the ancient ruins became buried under the earth.
4. When Nineveh was under siege, the peoples’ hearts melted, and their knees were knocking, and much pain was in all loins, and the faces of them all “gathered blackness” with terror” (2:10).
5. The NKJV says, “all their faces are drained of color.”

III. NINEVEH IS MOCKED (2:11, 12)

1. The words “lion” and “lioness” are used eight times in verses 11, 12, and 13.
2. King Sennacherib’s sarcastic officer, Rabshakeh, had mocked King Hezekiah and the people of Judah. He stood by the gate of Jerusalem and taunted King Hezekiah, and mocked his trust in the LORD.
3. Rabshakeh made fun of King Hezekiah. And he mocked King Hezekiah’s God. And he ridiculed King Hezekiah’s religion.
4. Rabshakeh cried out, “Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?” (II Kings 18:34, 35).
5. Now it was the LORD’s turn to ask the same question – “Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions?” (2:11).

6. Assyria and Babylon, like Great Britain today, both used the lion as a symbol of their empires. Archaeologists have discovered art and sculpture depicting lions with men's heads and men with lion heads, etc.
7. Museums all over the world contain Assyrian sculpture of lions. The Assyrians thought of themselves as fierce lions.
8. So, the Lord asked them, "Where is the dwelling of the lions?" (2:11). Verses 11 and 12 vividly describe the butchery and atrocities of the Assyrians – "The lion did tear in pieces..." (2:12).
9. Comparing Nineveh to a lion's den, Nahum emphasizes their cruelty and God's judgment.
10. The LORD of hosts was against them (2:13). It was too late for Nineveh. God would burn up her impressive chariots. They would be destroyed and cut off "from the earth" (2:13), to be heard from no more.
11. Charles L. Feinberg said, "The prediction of the prophet of God has been fulfilled so literally, that armies have marched over the city of Nineveh without knowing they were passing over its ruins" (*The Minor Prophets*).
12. The chariots of Assyria represent all her weapons of war, just as the tank represents modern warfare (2:13).
13. Assyria was known for burning cities to the ground. Now the LORD would see to it that Nineveh was burned to the ground, never to be rebuilt (2:13).

CONCLUSION:

1. Nahum prophesied during the same period as Isaiah, and their messages regarding Assyria are very similar (cf. II Kings 19:20-37).
2. Over 100 years earlier, the LORD sent the prophet Jonah to Nineveh. Jonah walked into the city and he cried out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4).
3. And the Bible says that the people of Nineveh, including the king and his nobles, "believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5).
4. So, God withdrew His hand of judgment, and the Ninevites were spared. Our Lord referred to this in Matthew 12:41 – "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."
5. But as is often the case, the Ninevites went back to their wicked pagan ways, and by the time the prophet Nahum arrived on the scene 100 years later, they were more wicked than ever (Nahum 1:1, 2).

6. The Bible teaches that God is patient and long-suffering. Many times we read in Scripture that the LORD is gracious and merciful, and slow to anger (cf. Nahum 1:3).
7. But His patience can be exhausted. It happened in the days of Noah. It happened when He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. It happened when He allowed the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and the temple, and take God's people into captivity.
8. It happened to all of the great world empires – Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece and Rome.
9. And it happened to Assyria. God cut them off (2:13; cf. 1:12, 14, 15; 3:15).