

Nahum:

There Is a God that Judges in the Earth

“The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgsion. Selah. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. For the needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever. Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.”

Psalm 9:15-20

“Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD. Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces. As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun. Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath. The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.”

Psalm 58:6-11

Preparatory Reading: II Kings 17,18,19; Isaiah 10; Ezekiel 31.

Introduction:

1. We believe every word of God is profitable for spiritual life (Prov 30:5; Luke 4:4; II Tim 3:16-17).
2. We are thankful for Nahum 1:1; 2:8; and 3:7, which state the historical event and timing of the book.
3. World history is His story – Jehovah’s rule in the affairs of nations for His glory and people, and the lessons of history (He will mention *No* in Egypt to warn *Nineveh*; 3:8) are for the profit of the wise.
4. We find references to Assyria and Nineveh in the first chapters of Genesis (2:14; 10:11-12,22; 25:18).
5. There is much about Nineveh and Assyria in the Bible. Consider these mentioned Assyrian kings: Pul (II Kgs 15:19), Tiglathpileser (II Kgs 15:29), Shalmaneser (II Kgs 17:3), Sargon (Is 20:1), Sennacherib (II Kgs 18:13), Esarhaddon (II Kgs 19:37), and Asnappar (Ezra 4:10).
6. The Assyrian inscriptions mention these kings of Israel: Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea; and they mention these kings of Judah: Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh.
7. Assyria had been a plague to Israel (ten tribes) and finally took them captive (II Kings 17:6,23-24).
8. Judah needed this prophecy, for they were tired of fear and threats of Assyria (II Kings 18:14-15).
9. Since they had overthrown and taken the 10 tribes and deported them, how would Judah stand? And this siege that lasted three years was witnessed by Hezekiah and those in Judah (II Kings 18:9-10,13).
10. Get a map of the Assyrian Empire (back of your Bible, an atlas, or online searching), and identify the locations of Nineveh, Babylon, Samaria, Jerusalem, Judah, and Thebes in Egypt (*No* in Nahum 3:8).
11. The map will show how overwhelming and surrounding the Assyrians were to Judah, which enemies the LORD overthrew according to the prophecy of Nahum, which should comfort and encourage you, no matter how bleak your circumstances or formidable your enemies! Praise the high King of heaven!
12. The angel of the Lord smote 185,000 choice Assyrian soldiers dead, and then some years later Nabopolassar and then Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city, as prophesied by Zephaniah (Zep 2:13).
13. It was not until the last 150 years that the true city of Nineveh was even discovered by archaeologists, across the Tigris River from the modern city of Mosul, Iraq. It matches all the Bible says about it.
14. For those entertained by linguistic features, this book employs the Hebrew alphabet and the sounds of the letters in a very creative way, based on the examination of some. See Davis Dictionary, “Nahum.”
15. Nahum provides some very glorious language of the Bible – exalting God’s power and glory (1:2-6).
16. This book was written to the Jews, so it is a book of comfort to them by its denunciation of Nineveh.
17. A lesson? Though your circumstances may appear overwhelmingly difficult, God can deliver you.
18. A lesson? The God of heaven will surely judge all cruelty, hatred, malice, and violence in the earth.
19. A lesson? There is no enemy a child of God should fear; He will deliver him and destroy his enemies.
20. A lesson? America has been the beauty of the earth for 200 years, but God will strip her (Ps 9:15-20)!
21. A lesson? If Nineveh was judged so severely for spiritual adultery, we must hate the sin also (Jas 4:4).
22. A lesson? God’s deliverances and goodness should lead us to repentance and righteousness (1:15).
23. A lesson? The prophecies and history of the Bible and world are for lessons in righteousness (3:8).
24. A lesson? Your deliverance from sin, death, the devil, and hell is more glorious and worthy of praise.

Chapter 1

Introduction of the prophet and prophecy (1); the terribleness of God in judging His enemies (2-6); His goodness in favoring those who trust in Him (7); the coming total destruction of Nineveh and Sennacherib for the deliverance of the Jews (8-14); the blessedness of such heralds and their news (15).

1 The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

- A. The prophetic words *burden of Nineveh* are God's judgment on Assyria by their capital.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit introduces several prophecies of judgment this way (Is 13:1; Mal 1:1).
 - 2. The Assyrian capital on the Tigris was 250 miles north of Babylon on the Euphrates.
 - 3. It had been founded very early by the relatives of Nimrod of Ham (Gen 10:10-12).
 - 4. The city is addressed as synecdoche for the whole empire ruled from there.
- B. Jonah's warning to this same city, which saved it, was considerably earlier (II Kgs 14:23-29).
 - 1. While the order of the Old Testament books requires explanation, observe the order here.
 - 2. Jonah prophesied to Israel before the Assyrians took it, but Nahum to Judah (1:15).
 - 3. It was written during or between the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah (Micah 1:1; Zep 1:1).
 - 4. It was written after the destruction of No and before the destruction of Nineveh (3:7-11).
 - 5. It was written before Sennacherib's death, if 1:11-14 speaks of Rabshakeh and him.
 - 6. We may be able to narrow it down to around Hezekiah's 14th year (II Kings 18:9-17).
- C. We know nothing of certainty concerning this prophet or his designation as an *Elkoshite*.

2 God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.

- A. God is jealous (Ex 34:14). The jealousy here is not against His people for spiritual adultery.
- B. The LORD revengeth (Deut 32:35). The vengeance here is against His enemies, and it should be the comfort of all His people that vengeance is His (Deut 32:39-43; Ps 94:1; Rom 12:19)!
- C. It is wonderful to read descriptions like this of God's anger against His and our enemies, as David rejoiced in Psalm 18 (also found in II Samuel 22).
- D. The LORD – the independent and self-existing Jehovah (Exodus 3:14; 6:3; Ps 68:4; 83:18).
- E. God's fury is controlled and wisely applied wrath, unlike the foolish and vain fury of man.
- F. The enemies of God shall not get away with their blasphemies and sins for long (Ps 58:6-11).
- G. God reserves wrath for the sins of His enemies and sufferings of His people to accumulate for an overrunning flood of His furious anger (Gen 15:16; I Thess 2:16; Rev 19:15).
- H. Why in the world should you ever revenge yourself, when this God is your Defender? Glory!

3 The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

- A. The LORD is slow to anger, but He is not slack regarding promises or vengeance (II Pet 3:9).
 - 1. Slow to anger means there will be more of it the longer He waits (Rom 2:5-6; I Pet 3:20).
 - 2. These are not comforting words of mercy to children, but certain revenge to the wicked.
 - 3. Never doubt or fear that God will forget, forgive, or overlook the wickedness of enemies.
 - 4. The blaspheming and profane pagans in the world today will be utterly overthrown.
 - 5. His silence should never be perceived as agreement with your sins, fool (Ps 50:21-22)!
 - 6. Nineveh, you may bask in military successes and economic prosperity, but not for long!

7. The reason you still exist is due to His patience and providence, not His impotence!
- B. The terror of tornadoes and hurricanes are mere tools of the blessed God in His great power.
 1. Tornadoes and hurricanes are greater than man, so the Lord made appeal to natural disasters as indicative of His great ability and power to wreck and destroy Nineveh.
 2. As horrifically as tornadoes and hurricanes can destroy, so will the Lord do to Nineveh.
 3. The context demands that the sense of *storm* here must be very powerful and severe.
 4. Whirlwinds – tornadoes and hurricanes – have terrorized men, and for good reason!
 5. The boiling clouds of tornado or hurricane weather are the LORD on His way!
 6. All storms are entirely under His control and direction by His voice (Ps 29:3-10).

4 He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.

- A. Written to Jews, God reminded them of His power to rebuke the Red Sea and dry up Jordan.
- B. The verses can also be understood figuratively of bringing economic droughts on nations.
- C. If God is able to command or rebuke great bodies of water and cause fruitful places of the earth to languish, how much more shall He be able to rebuke Assyria and cause it to spoil!
- D. He is able and willing to do this against a nation or against a single man (Job 34:29-30).

5 The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

- A. Written to Jews, God reminded them of His power to altogether burn and shake Mount Sinai!
- B. Earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis are further tokens that terrify all inhabitants of earth.
- C. These verses can be read literally, providentially, supernaturally, or figuratively, or all four.
 1. The LORD caused Sinai to quake and burn by His blast furnace (Ex 19:18; Judges 5:5).
 2. God has His sovereign way in the providential use of such literal quaking and burning.
 3. God burned up the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah supernaturally for their vile sins.
 4. God can overthrow mountains of people or mountains of religious institutions (Hag 2:6).

6 Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

- A. We have already been told God is jealous and furious (1:2), and how shall Nineveh survive?
- B. The graphic language of a prophet produces some powerful words, sounds, and pictures!
- C. These verses can be read literally, providentially, supernaturally, or figuratively, or all four.
- D. These introductory words by Nahum set forth the dreadful and terrible LORD Jehovah, Who has reached the time to return upon Nineveh the violence and wickedness they caused others.

7 The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.

- A. In the midst of all this glorious language of God's jealous fury is His comfort to His people.
- B. The same LORD that is jealous and furious with His enemies loves those who trust in Him.
- C. He is furious fire of jealous vengeance to enemies, but a strong hold for help to His people.
- D. His people who believe and trust Him can know that He will deliver them from trouble.
- E. The difference between the righteous and the wicked, the elect and reprobates, is enormous.

8 But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

- A. The adversative *but* indicates a terrible contrast to His help of His people – He ruins enemies!
- B. As by a tsunami, the blessed LORD Jehovah would make an utter and final end of Nineveh.
- C. The nations surrounding Nineveh literally became a flood of opponents they could not resist.
- D. It was not until the last 150 years that archaeologists could even discover the city of Nineveh.
- E. Great mounds that appeared like the landscape have revealed palaces, statues, libraries, etc.

9 What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.

- A. The prophet, for the sake of Jews, mocks the aims of Assyria against Jerusalem and Judah.
- B. The blessed God would make a complete and final end of Nineveh and the Assyrians.
- C. The destruction that was coming would not need to be repeated – one affliction would do it!

10 For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.

- A. This verse explains the factors involved in the total ruin and final end of Nineveh from 1:9.
- B. The simile is thorns folded together by their own branches holding one another, which results in a single fire destroying them all, a proper figure for this wicked nation (II Sam 23:5-6).
- C. The careless and impotent character of drunkards describes the arrogant luxury of Nineveh.
- D. The fire of God's judgment via the surrounding nations destroyed them as fully dry tinder.

11 There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor.

- A. The most blasphemous and threatening king of Assyria against Judah and the LORD was Sennacherib, who came out of Nineveh and returned to Nineveh (II Kgs 18:13; 19:16,36).
- B. Rabshakeh was merely a mouth for the king in declaring his utter disdain for Judah's God.

12 Thus saith the LORD; Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more.

- A. Here is the judgment of the Lord – here is the burden of Nineveh precisely declared by God.
- B. Though the Assyrians (*they*) are free from all concerns and fears (*quiet*) and very numerous (*many*), though they be confident and powerful, they shall be cut down and destroyed! Amen.
- C. When will this confident and numerous host be cut down? When the LORD passed through the host by His angel, as He did in Egypt many years earlier (II Kings 19:35; Ex 12:12).
- D. Or did Sennacherib merely pass through the land, having besieged Lachish, but not firing a single shot upon Jerusalem?
- E. God had chastened Judah by the Assyrians, but He would end His use of them (Is 10:5-19).
- F. Observe a wonderful play on words by comparing no further affliction here with that in 1:9!

13 For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.

- A. It was at that time – Sennacherib's defeat – that God broke the Assyrian yoke from off Judah.
- B. They had paid tribute to Assyria since the days of Ahaz, Hezekiah's father (II Kgs 16:7).

14 And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.

- A. The singular male pronoun returns to Sennacherib, for God had commanded concerning him.
- B. The famous career of Sennacherib came to a screeching halt with the destruction of his army.
- C. While you supplicate your foolish idols, I will destroy any integrity you think they have.
- D. While you supplicate your foolish idols, I will make your grave by the hands of your sons!
- E. You vile and profane blasphemer! You should not have boasted of such things against me!

15 Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

- A. Paul makes use of this passage and/or its cousin in Romans 10:15 (compare Isaiah 52:7).
- B. If you consider the Assyrian use of these words, enjoy the great comfort they brought Judah.
 - 1. The exclamation point is justified! How beautiful were the feet of Nahum with this news?
 - 2. Not only will the blessed God deliver His people, but He brings them news in advance.
 - 3. The greatest and surest form of peace is the annihilation and destruction of all enemies!
 - 4. Based on God's great deliverance, Judah should keep all the ordinances of their religion.
- C. Since Paul took these or similar words and applied them to the gospel, we should as well!
 - 1. The exclamation point is justified! We have been saved from sin, death, Satan, and hell.
 - 2. We had a king against us (Rev 9:11), who kept us captive in his palace (Luke 11:14-22).
 - 3. Not only has and will our God save us from these things, He has told about the salvation!
 - 4. The greatest and surest form of peace is the annihilation and destruction of our enemies!
 - 5. Based on God's great deliverance, we should keep all the N.T. ordinances of our religion.
 - 6. God's goodness in delivering His people should lead to repentance (Ps 50:15; Rom 2:4).

Chapter 2

The prophet introduces the Chaldeans and Medes, who would dash Nineveh in pieces (1); explains the use He had made of Nineveh against His people (2); describes the war preparations of the Babylonians and Medes (3-5); tells the collapse and ruin of the city, with a call to plunder her riches (6-9); mocks their former greatness, rage, and rapine (10-12); and explains Jehovah as the cause for the great reversal of fortune (13).

1 He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily.

- A. The two male pronouns represent the destroyers of Nineveh and the Ninevites themselves.
- B. The overthrow of Nineveh was not by subtlety, but rather by frontal assault and long siege.
- C. Nebuchadnezzar was "hammer of the whole earth" in his divinely blessed judgment on nations (Jer 50:23); but here is Cyaxares or Nabopolassar around 600-625 B.C.
- D. Nineveh was overthrown by a confederacy of the Babylonians, Medes, and likely others.
- E. The second clause mocks Nineveh by exhorting to do all they against the certain destruction.
 - 1. *Keep the munition* mocks efforts to do all they can to preserve and use their fortifications.
 - 2. *Watch the way* mocks efforts to spy on the whereabouts and activities of their enemies.
 - 3. *Make thy loins strong* mocks any efforts at girding up their resolve and strength for battle.
 - 4. *Fortify thy power mightily* mocks all their efforts to prepare defenses against the enemy.

2 For the LORD hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches.

- A. Here is a parenthetical thought telling hearers or readers of God's chastening of His people.
- B. The successes of Assyria against Judah and Israel were by the LORD Jehovah's chastening.
 - 1. Neither Nineveh nor the Assyrian Empire was invincible; God gave temporary success.
 - 2. As Isaiah prophesied, when God finished using Assyria, He destroyed them (Is 10:12).
 - 3. Judah had the *excellent* city and temple of the great God, yet He chastened them severely.
 - 4. If God so fought against His own excellent people, how much more against these pagans!
- C. The Assyrians were the *emptiers*, for they *emptied* all of Israel and the fenced cities of Judah.
- D. The fruitful vine that God had planted in Canaan, His own people, had their branches marred.

3 The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken.

- A. The prophet, after a parenthesis in 2:2, returns to the male "he" of Media and Babylon in 2:1.
- B. Armies commonly used red and scarlet to (1) intimidate and (2) disguise wounds (Is 63:1-3).
- C. The chariots of assaulting armies had torches to (1) light their way and (2) to burn the city.
- D. The fir trees, supplying wood for military use, would be shaken by axes and saws (Is 14:8).

4 The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings.

- A. Here is a graphic picture of Chaldean and Median chariots pressing the attack in Nineveh.
 - 1. A chariot attack would be no leisure drive; it would be pressed with furious driving.
 - 2. They will not follow choreographed maneuvers; they would rage and jostle (collide).
 - 3. With the flaming torches already mentioned (2:3), they themselves will seem like torches.
- B. It is amazing how modern interpreters can get a view of America's highways from this text; but if context is ignored, this passage can be turned into most anything the heart can imagine.

5 He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared.

- A. There is little reason to switch subject here from the "he" of 2:1, the Chaldeans and Medes.
 - 1. The description has pictured victorious assault forces coming to dash in pieces the city.
 - 2. If the "defence" here poses a problem, consider (a) that Nineveh would already have been prepared for defence, and (b) there is a crucial need for defence near a walled city.
- B. The commander of the assaulting forces will muster his best captains and *give out the orders*.
- C. The assault force, carrying heavy assault weapons, yet hurrying, *will stumble going forward*.
- D. They shall *hurry to the wall of the city* to begin their efforts to breach it or climb over it.
- E. The *defence* in this place is the covering that assault soldiers at a wall must have to survive.

6 The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.

- A. While the precise application of these words is difficult, we know that devastation occurred.
- B. There are historical accounts of a flood of the Tigris destroying 2.5 miles of the western wall, at which news the king of Nineveh burned the palace down on himself and his concubines.

- C. There are conjectures that the dams and gates used to control the several rivers in the vicinity were gotten open and caused a flood within the city that dissolved the palace thereof.
- D. This is one of the prophecies where we know the general fulfillment, so we wait for details: the prophet could be speaking figuratively of rivers of soldiers or literally of water damage.

7 And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts.

- A. This could be a personification of the whole city, or it could reference the queen of Nineveh.
- B. While we do not know this woman by name, she is likely the queen of Nineveh at the time.
 - 1. We do have a singular woman under consideration in context of a palace being dissolved.
 - 2. What other woman could be notable enough to name, who would have mourning maids?
- C. The maids, who once enjoyed her prosperity, are now mourning like doves (Is 38:14; 59:11).
- D. They are showing their grief by tabering (beating) their chests in grief (Luke 18:13; 23:48).

8 But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, shall they cry; but none shall look back.

- A. The adversative *but* opening the verse is to set the contrast with the inhabitants fleeing away.
- B. Nineveh was a very ancient city, as the Bible proves (Gen 10:11-12), like a permanent lake.
- C. If there is reference here to proliferating fish in such a pool, Jonah confirmed it (Jonah 4:11).
- D. But in spite of that, her soldiers and citizens shall run away, though there are cries to stand.

9 Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for there is none end of the store and glory out of all the pleasant furniture.

- A. The Chaldeans and Medes added greatly to the wealth of their nations by the spoil they took.
- B. The prophet, speaking by God, urges the conquerors to take the endless treasures of Nineveh.

10 She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.

- A. The populous and decorated city had its inhabitants chased away and its coffers emptied.
- B. This is a fair trade for having emptied the cities of Israel and the fenced cities of Judah (2:2).
- C. Here are four descriptive phases of total consternation, dread, fear, and hopelessness. Glory!

11 Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feedingplace of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid?

- A. The prophet mocked Nineveh's former fearlessness like that of a roaring and ravaging lion.
- B. But now the spirit of the city is totally changed, as the previous verse graphically described.

12 The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.

- A. As a male lion ravaging the prey for his pride and storing up for the future, so had Nineveh once been a marauder of nations, plundering and accumulating wealth in their capital.
- B. The Assyrians ranged from Egypt to Pakistan and devoured the wealth of many nations.

13 Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

- A. The great change in the status of Nineveh and Assyria is by the LORD of hosts. Glorify Him!
- B. The LORD Jehovah has a mighty army of angels – His host – one of which slew 185,000!
- C. It is terrible when the LORD of hosts becomes an enemy, even to His people (Is 63:7-10).
 - 1. Ask the Jews, who could not get ahead no matter how hard they worked (Hag 1:1-11).
 - 2. Ask the Jews, who crucified Jesus and died for it (Matt 21:33-46; 22:1-7; Luk 19:41-44).
 - 3. Ask Paul, who warned that it is a fearful things to fall into His hands (Heb 10:26-31).
 - 4. Our God is a consuming fire, worthy of fearful and acceptable worship (Heb 12:28-29).
- D. The arrogant and profane voices of messengers – like Rabshakeh – were never heard again!

Chapter 3

Introduction to another view of Nineveh's judgment and crimes (1); the destruction will be catastrophic, but very justified for her sins (2-4); God will expose and shame this city for her sins (5-7); the great Egyptian city of No was destroyed, and so will Nineveh (8-11); regardless of preparations for safety, Nineveh shall fall (12-15); all the merchants, captains, and nobles would desert (16-18); the conclusion to Nineveh is permanent destruction (19).

1 Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not;

- A. Judgment is declared with emphasis; some crimes are listed; Nineveh is condemned by God.
- B. *Woe* is a word for horrible judgment and trouble (Numbers 21:29; I Sam 4:7-8; Rev 12:12).
- C. There is no doubt about the subject of this prophetic doom, for it was stated earlier (1:1; 2:8).
- D. Nineveh was a *bloody city* for the cruel, malicious, rapacious, and violent nature of her wars.
- E. The reputation of Nineveh by Biblical and historical records indicates her *bloodthirstiness*.
- F. At home and abroad, the city was full of *lies and robbery* and intent on pursuing more *prey*.
- G. The prophet's final words indicate all nations had been abused this way by Nineveh (3:19).

2 The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the pransing horses, and of the jumping chariots.

- A. Due to the positive light in which they are presented, the Chaldeans and Medes are in view.
- B. A full invasion of Nineveh would involve many troops. History indicates maybe 400,000.
- C. The picture is a large, mobile military force coming with haste to enter and plunder Nineveh.
 - 1. Consider how Jeremiah described the terrifying panic such troops would cause (Jer 47:3).
 - 2. Many chariots and/or cavalry and wagons would involve the crack of whips over horses.
 - 3. A singular whip is used for many whips by a collective noun, a common literary practice.
 - 4. An army of chariots would make a great clatter by their wheels, horses, and bouncing.
 - 5. Imagine the ground shaking as they raced to the city, and then as they raced through it!

3 The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses:

- A. The Chaldean and Median cavalry would come armed with intimidating swords and spears.
- B. The weapons of death would not be in their scabbards, but lifted up to attack, maim, and kill.
- C. The result was catastrophic defeat, with dead bodies everywhere, causing difficult passage.

4 Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts.

- A. The explanation is given for the carnage and conquest just described: Nineveh was profane.
- B. God blessed Assyria with many advantages, and she was haughty against Him through them.
 - 1. Read the Lord's graphic description of His favor to Nineveh and Assyria (Ezek 31:3-9).
 - 2. Therefore, due to his profanity in lifting up his heart, God judged him (Ezek 31:10-17).
 - 3. We understand *whoredoms* here to primarily be idolatry substituted for the only true God.
 - 4. The *whoredoms* by Israel and Judah intend this sense (Ezek 16:1-34; 23:1-49; Hosea 1:2).
- C. Nineveh was given to *witchcrafts* and *whoredoms*, thereby enslaving nations and families.
 - 1. Rather than give God any glory for her greatness, she was puffed up in pride (Is 10:5-15).
 - 2. The antiquity, beauty, power, and riches of Assyria were used to seduce other nations.
 - 3. Compare how the Lord described Israel and Judah's infatuation with her (Ezek 23:1-10).
 - 4. Compare how the Lord described Babylon's pride and idolatry similarly (Isaiah 47:1-15).
 - 5. She mocked any and all gods as far beneath her might and power, corrupting many.
- D. Was there literal whoredom and witchcraft in Nineveh? Indeed, as history records clearly.

5 Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame.

- A. When the blessed God is against any nation or man, look out (Ps 9:17; 50:22; Heb 10:31)!
- B. As men would strip adulteresses or whores to expose their nakedness for punishment, so the blessed and holy God would strip this vile and violent city and expose her ugliness to all.
- C. God would strip away Nineveh's beautiful glory to leave her empty, void, and waste (2:10); rather than the beauty and queen city of nations, she would be a pile of worthless refuse.
- D. This kind of language was common by prophets about Israel and Judah's spiritual adulteries (Isaiah 3:16-26; 47:1-9; Jer 13:22-27; Lam 1:18; Ezek 16:35-43; 23:25-29).

6 And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock.

- A. Continuing the thought from the previous verse, God would defile and dirty pretty Nineveh.
- B. The public punishment of adulteresses, whores, and captive women also included dirtying their exposed bodies with dirt and dung, so as to shame and ugly them to the uttermost.
- C. The prophet concludes with all nations laughing and ridiculing Nineveh's nakedness (3:19).
- D. God used similar language in describing what He would do to Judah's priests (Malachi 2:3).

7 And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

- A. Concluding his line of argument from 3:5-6, the prophet condemns the now polluted woman as having no admirers, mourners, or comforters. All her lovers have forsaken her utterly.
- B. The city that once attracted confederations and commerce is now rejected as fully worthless, for she was totally destroyed and overthrown, so that visitors could not find her location!

8 *Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?*

- A. No was a great city of Egypt; it was overthrown as an example to the confident Ninevites.
- B. Compare the other references to this city and other overthrows (Jer 46:25-26; Eze 30:14-16).
- C. The city is best known as Thebes (Greek), 500 miles south of the Mediterranean on the Nile.
- D. Some commentators suggest Alexandria, but there is no evidence of a great city there prior to the destruction of Nineveh, and Thebes was such a great city taken by the late Assyrians.
- E. While described as populous here, she is said to have a multitude (Jer 46:25; Ezek 30:15).
- F. Nineveh derived much commerce, nourishment, and protection from rivers, and so did No.
- G. The city of Thebes (No) had the Red Sea for a rampart and a mountain range as well, and it straddled the Nile River and the channels or rivers formed by that great river at that juncture.
- H. God gave Nineveh a history lesson that impregnable cities of great empires could be taken.

9 *Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers.*

- A. The great city of No (Thebes) could raise very large armies by these confederate nations.
- B. Remember that Zerah the Ethiopian came against Asa with a host of 1,000,000 (II Chr 14:9).

10 *Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.*

- A. This great city, similar to Nineveh in ways, was taken more than once by the late Assyrians.
- B. This ancient and capital city of Egypt with natural protection and large armies was taken.
- C. The cruelty of warfare in that time made no distinction for young children (Ps 137:7-9).

11 *Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy.*

- A. The comparison between No (Thebes) and Nineveh continues to warn confident Nineveh.
- B. When God pours out His judgment, men are stupefied, as drunk (Is 19:11-17; 29:9-10,14).
- C. In contrast to their prior boastful arrogance, Nineveh would hide from the gathering enemy.
- D. Similar to No (Thebes), Nineveh would seek assistance from others to bolster their defense.

12 *All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the firstripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.*

- A. All thy strong holds! No matter how many or how secure, they would fall easily (Hab 1:10).
- B. The firstripe figs become the heaviest and ripest, so they fall easily at slight disturbances.
- C. The towers, fortresses, and defenses of Nineveh would fall as easily as these firstripe figs.
- D. When the blessed God is in a military campaign, the objectives are achieved with great ease.

13 *Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars.*

- A. The mighty men and warriors of Nineveh will be like women – easily frightened and hiding.

- B. This derisive speech about a city or nation's warriors was common by prophets (Isaiah 13:8; 19:16; Jer 6:24; 30:6; 48:41; 49:22,24; 50:37,43; 51:30; Micah 4:9-10).
- C. The *gates of thy land* – the passes and outposts – would be deserted and allow easy access.
- D. Every remaining means of defense ... “Katie, bar the door” ... would be totally burned up.
- E. Compare the “Sherman’s Neckties” or twisted railroad track of America’s Civil War.

14 Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln.

- A. The prophet, speaking for the LORD, mocks their efforts to fortify Nineveh against attack.
- B. Go ahead, warns the prophet; fill your cisterns with water for a siege. You are going down.
- C. Fortify thy strong holds. Reinforce their walls and ceilings. I have forecast their ruin (3:12).
- D. Get your brick manufacturing operating at full capacity, but it will not be nearly enough.

15 There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts.

- A. Store up water; fortify your defenses; use many bricks! They will burn you alive in your city!
- B. Store up water; fortify your defenses; use many bricks! They will cut you off with the sword!
- C. Here are two similes using the cankerworm (more to follow), showing the Spirit’s creativity!
 1. What is a cankerworm? Two destructive varieties of the inchworm, or larvae of geometrid moths – one variety coming out in the spring and one in the fall.
 2. First, as the cankerworm destroys orchards and shade trees by devouring the foliage, the fire and sword of the Chaldeans and Medes would eat up all belonging to Nineveh.
 3. Second, as the cankerworm rapidly multiplies and goes forth in great numbers, it does not matter how many Nineveh was able to gather together, for they were utterly overthrown.
- D. Repeating the mockery of multiplying cankerworms, the prophet uses the locust to illustrate: no matter how many soldiers or defenders the city can muster, it will be utterly destroyed.

16 Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and flieth away.

- A. Nineveh was rich, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, and the place of many confederacies and treaties, thus attracting many merchants, which the prophet exaggerates by hyperbole as being more in number than the stars of heaven.
- B. This multitude of merchants had lived off Nineveh’s successes while the getting was good; but now as things got rough and the future of Nineveh was in jeopardy, they would fly away as do adult male moths and set up shop elsewhere.

17 Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are.

- A. Those with crowns are subordinate rulers, tributary princes, mercenary captains, and so forth.
- B. These rulers that once managed a far-flung and powerful empire are as many as the locusts, but there is to be particular notice made of the habits of these creatures.
 1. They band together and camp at night and during chilly weather, when they do not fly.
 2. But when the sun arises and gives heat, then they spread their wings and move away.

3. The many government officials and military officers disappeared under heat of battle.
4. It would be amazing how many of those who had flocked to Nineveh could not be found.

18 Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them.

- A. The counselors, nobles, magistrates, mayors, and priests are asleep and unable to help at all.
- B. They shall dwell in the dust, as dead and dead; they will have no ability or zeal for the war.
- C. The people under their charge, who once moved as one man, are now scattered abroad.
- D. There is no rule left in Assyria – all authority, discipline, rule, and national structure is gone.

19 There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

- A. There are three facts: (1) the ruin is fatal; (2) all will rejoice at her; (3) Nineveh deserves it!
- B. The bruise and wound of the assault is permanent, forever. It is a fatal wound without cure.
- C. What is a bruit? It is a report or matter noised abroad, rumour, tidings; a public utterance.
- D. All nations would rejoice at her desolation, for she had caused them much pain beforehand.

Conclusion:

1. Can we compare this graphic language describing the ruin of Nineveh to the graphic language of Revelation describing our Lord's glorious victory over sin, death, enemies, hell, and the devil? Glory!
2. God overthrows nations and dashes them one against another in His wrath. Pagan Rome is a joke today. Papal Rome is a joke. Napoleon is a joke. Mussolini, Hitler, and the USSR are jokes.
3. A lesson? Though your circumstances may appear overwhelmingly difficult, God can deliver you.
4. A lesson? The God of heaven will surely judge all cruelty, hatred, malice, and violence in the earth.
5. A lesson? There is no enemy a child of God should fear; He will deliver him and destroy his enemies.
6. A lesson? America has been the beauty of the earth for 200 years, but God will strip her (Ps 9:15-20)!
7. A lesson? If Nineveh was judged so severely for spiritual adultery, we must hate the sin also (Jas 4:4).
8. A lesson? God's deliverances and goodness should lead us to repentance and righteousness (1:15).
9. A lesson? The prophecies and history of the Bible and world are for lessons in righteousness (3:8).
10. A lesson? Your deliverance from sin, death, the devil, and hell is more glorious and worthy of praise.

For Further Study:

1. "Nineveh," from Smith's Dictionary of the Bible ... <http://www.bible-history.com/smiths/N/Nineveh/>.
2. "Map of Assyria," by Wikipedia ... http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Map_of_Assyria.png.
3. "The Destruction of Israel," by Bible History ... http://www.bible-history.com/destruction_of_israel/index.html.
4. "Thebes," from Wikipedia ... http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thebes,_Egypt.
5. "Habakkuk," a similar commentary by this author ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/habakkuk.pdf>.
6. "Zephaniah," a brief overview by this author ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/zephaniah.pdf>.
7. The sermon outline, "The King of Kings," ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/king-of-kings.pdf>.