

NINEVEH IS LAID WASTE

TEXT: NAHUM 3:1-19

INTRODUCTION:

1. My message tonight is entitled, “Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her?” (3:7).
2. In the book of Nahum, we see these words repeated: “Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts...” (2:13; 3:5).
3. Charles Feinberg said that Romans 8:31 teaches “if God be for us, no one can successfully be against us. The reverse is true also: if God be against an individual or nation by virtue of sin, then no one can successfully be for that person or nation” (*Minor Prophets*).
4. This is the theme of the book of Nahum. God judged Nineveh, and the great city was destroyed, never to be rebuilt; never again to be inhabited.
5. The *Scofield Study Bible* says, “The moral theme (of the book of Nahum) is: the holiness of Jehovah which must deal with sin in judgment.”

I GOD JUDGED THEM FOR THEIR VIOLENCE (3:1-3)

1. “Woe to the bloody city!” (3:1).
2. Proverbs 6:16 and 17 says, “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood...”
3. The Assyrians were constantly at war. They were so cruel and brutal, that oftentimes when the Assyrian army approached a village, many of the residents would commit suicide rather than risk being slowly tortured to death.
4. Yet these cruel, war-like people repented at the preaching of Jonah.
5. Jesus said, “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here” (Matthew 12:41).
6. The people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, but one hundred years and now they were more wicked and brutal than ever.
7. One commentator writes that the Ninevites were known by their “atrocious practice of cutting off hands and feet, ears and noses, gouging out eyes, lopping off heads” (Walter Maier, *Book of Nahum*).

8. Archaeologists have discovered reliefs in the Assyrian King Ashurbanipal's palace. In one of these reliefs, the king and queen of Assyria are pictured at a banquet, celebrating a victory over the Elamites. Near the royal table is a fruit tree. And hanging from one of the branches of the tree is the dangling head of the vanquished king of the Elamites.
9. The Assyrians were known to be terrible liars and robbers, and God judged them for their lies and robbery (3:1). Any nation that attempted to sign a treaty with them, soon discovered that they could not be trusted.
10. Proverbs 6:16 and 17 says, "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue..."
11. Nahum 3:2 and 3 vividly describes the fall of Nineveh. This description of the siege of Nineveh has been praised as an unexcelled account whether in sacred or secular literature (Feinberg, *Minor Prophets*).
12. Merrill Unger wrote, "With consummate literary skill Nahum takes the reader into the midst of the battle" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).
13. The corpses piled up everywhere (3:3). People were tripping and stumbling over all the dead bodies (3:3b).
14. This reminds us of II Kings 19:35, when "the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses."

II. GOD JUDGED THEM FOR THEIR WHOREDOMS (3:4)

1. In the Bible, harlotry and false religion are closely intertwined (3:4). In the book of Revelation, the powerful, apostate church is referred to as "the great whore" in Revelation 17.
2. Frequently throughout the Old Testament, the LORD warned the Israelites not to go "a whoring" after the gods of their heathen neighbors.
3. In Leviticus 20:6, the LORD warned them not to go "a whoring after" familiar spirits, and after wizards. The Assyrians were known for their witchcraft, sorcery, and occultism. Nineveh was "the mistress of witchcrafts" (3:4).
4. Demonism is the dynamic behind idolatry (cf. I Cor. 10:20, 21).
5. The Bible teaches that false gods are idols and devils. Deuteronomy 32:17 says, "They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not."
6. "Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts" (3:5; cf. 2:13).

7. Over the years, Nineveh survived many battles and conflicts, but when God declared that He was against them, it was too late.
8. God had already told them He was going to bury them. “I will make thy grave; for thou art vile” (1:14b).
9. God was going to show His contempt by lifting up their skirts over their face, so all of the other nations would see their shame and nakedness (3:5). The Assyrians would be disgraced and dishonored before the whole world.
10. God is not a respecter of persons, and He said the very same thing to the people of Judah. We see it in the book of Jeremiah (Jer. 13:9, 10, 26, 27), and in the book of Ezekiel (Ezek. 16:37, 38; cf. 23:29).
11. This same idea is carried over into the New Testament. James 4:4 says, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”
12. “And I will cast abominable filth upon thee...” (3:6). This is another sign of God’s contempt. Nineveh’s glory would soon turn to “abominable filth.”
13. Nineveh would be an object of both disgust and scorn. When God judged Nineveh, everyone fled from the city, saying, “Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her?” (3:7).
14. Nineveh would bare her misery alone. There would be no one to comfort her (3:7). She was greatly feared, but now would be greatly despised.
15. Years earlier, Assyria had conquered the great Egyptian city of No (cf. Isaiah 20:3, 4).
16. The city of No was also known as “No-Amon” after the prominent Egyptian god Amon, an idol with the body of a man with a ram’s head.
17. No was also known as “Thebes.”
18. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel predicted the fall of No. Jeremiah 46:25 says, “The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saith; Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings; even Pharaoh, and all them that trust in him.”
19. Ezekiel 30:14-16 says, “And I will...execute judgments in No...and I will cut off the multitude of No...and No shall be rent asunder.”
20. No was the capital city of Upper Egypt. It was situated on both banks of the Nile River, the longest river in the world. “Rivers” is plural in verse 8, referring to the Nile and its canals.
21. Nahum refers to the Nile River poetically as “the sea,” because it is so large that it looks like a sea when it overflows its banks (3:8).
22. No was celebrated for its splendid architecture, and its huge temples, and obelisks, and giant statues. Archaeologists describe its ruins as the most magnificent of any ancient civilization anywhere in the world.

23. Homer, the Greek poet, spoke of it having one hundred gates.
24. No had many strong allies (3:9), but despite the formidable power of Egypt and all her allies, the Assyrians overthrew No, and “she went into captivity” (3:10).
25. This was the main difference between the two cities. The Egyptians had many allies, but the Assyrians had no friends or allies (c. 3:7b).
26. What Assyria did to the city of No would now be done to Nineveh – her children would be “dashed in pieces” at the top of all the streets, and they would “cast lots for her honourable men” (become slaves), and all her great men would be taken captive and “bound in chains” (3:10).
27. The LORD asked Assyria, “Art thou better than populous No?” “Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity” (3:8, 10).

III GOD JUDGED THEM FOR THEIR DRUNKENNESS (3:11)

1. The Assyrians were in the middle of a big drinking party when the Babylonian army attacked Nineveh (3:11-15; cf. 1:10).
2. John Phillips wrote this about Nahum’s description of Nineveh’s fall: “This prophecy came true literally. Historians have described the last drunken orgy of Nineveh on the night the enemy finally broke through, and artists *have* painted the scene. In their paintings, we see the effeminate king, surrounded by his women, feasting, drinking, and toasting his useless gods as the slayers went about their vengeful work. History books tell us that as a final gesture of defiance, the king had himself burned alive in his palace. But the drunkenness to which Nahum referred was doubtless also figurative. The prophets often depicted doomed nations as drinking the cup of God’s wrath” (*Exploring the Minor Prophets*).
3. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah refer to “the cup of his fury” (Isaiah 51:17, 22; Jeremiah 25:15). Isaiah also refers to “the cup of trembling” (Isaiah 51:17, 22).
4. Ezekiel 23:33 refers to “the cup of astonishment and desolation.”
5. “Thou shalt be hid” (Nahum 3:11). Nineveh literally disappeared. Armies marched through the ruins, not realizing they were marching over the grave of Nineveh.
6. They stayed buried until around 1845, when British archaeologist Sir Austen Henry Layard discovered some of the palaces of Ancient Assyria, including King Sennacherib’s palace.
7. Assyria fell like ripe figs dropping off a fig tree (3:12).
8. The men of Assyria, debauched and drunken, were as helpless as women, and the gates of Nineveh were wide open to her enemies (3:13).

9. “The fire shall devour thy bars” (3:13b). Probably referring to the bars of the gates, which were mostly made of wood
10. Many died in the fire, and many died by the sword (3:14, 15).
11. Dramatically the prophet calls upon Nineveh to draw water for the siege, and to fortify the strong holds, and to secure clay and make strong the brickkiln.
12. But all of this would be useless, for the Lord had already decreed her downfall.

13. Nineveh was a very wealthy city – “Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven” (3:16a) – but their immense wealth quickly disappeared – “the cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away” (3:16b).

CONCLUSION:

1. Nineveh was doomed (3:19). Her ruin was complete and irretrievable. All who heard of her fall would rejoice and clap their hands (3:19).
2. F. B. Meyer was a Baptist pastor in England. He was born in 1847, and he died in 1929. He said this about Nahum’s prophecy:
3. “For Nineveh, from the time of her fall to the present, has been utterly waste. Her hurt has never been assuaged. A scar upon the earth’s surface alone marks her site. From such a spectacle we may well turn to our beloved country, and seriously question whether we are doing all that we can to stay a similar fate. There are many signs that she is being swept along in the same stream as has borne many mighty nations down to ruin. The growing luxury of the rich; the abject poverty of the poor (a child was burned in Whitechapel the other day through the mother having to sell the fire-guard to buy bread); the gross impurity and immorality of our streets; the increasing desecration of the Rest Day; and the overwhelming bill for drink — these things cannot be unpunished. May we not indeed fear that God will soon rise against us? Let us use our influence as citizens, and our prayer as saints, to avert a fate which if it comes will be irretrievable.”
4. F.B. Meyer’s words sound prophetic because today England is in terrible shape.
5. In the case of Nineveh, God used the Medes and the Chaldeans to destroy the city.
6. Today, the Lord is allowing the Muslims to overtake England. The mayor of London is a Muslim. Some parts of London are now almost 50 per cent Muslim, according to analysis from the Office for National Statistics.

7. If current trends (immigration and large Muslim families) continue the areas could become majority Muslim within ten years.
8. In 2015, an analysis of the most common name in England showed it was Mohammad.
9. Christianity has been in decline for decades, and many Christian church buildings have been converted into Muslim mosques. Not only buildings are being converted, but also people. The number of converts to Islam has doubled; and often they embrace radical Islam, such as Khalid Masood (born Adrian Russell Elms), the terrorist who recently murdered five people on the Westminster Bridge.
10. Again, I will quote F. B. Meyer: “These things (immorality, materialism, drinking, desecrating the Lord’s Day) cannot be unpunished. May we not indeed fear that God will soon rise against us? Let us use our influence as citizens, and our prayer as saints, to avert a fate which if it comes will be irretrievable.”