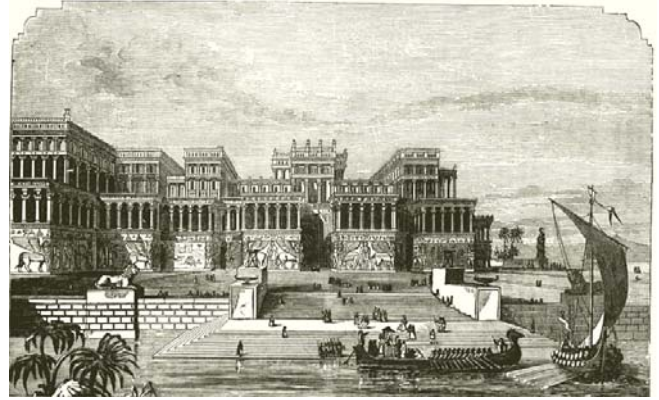


## 34 – Nahum: Nineveh is Doomed

- “Nahum” means *comfort or consolation*. All we know about Nahum is that he was from Elkosh. Some think it was Capernaum, which literally means “village of Nahum.”
- Nahum’s message **preaches the certain doom of Nineveh**, the very city that Jonah preached repentance (successfully) to 140 years earlier. But now Nineveh has reached the peak of her wickedness, and is facing sure destruction. A message of doom to Israel’s enemy would be comforting for the Jews.
- We don’t know for sure when Nahum wrote, but through various historical records we can safely assume it was **before 612 BC, which is when Nineveh was destroyed**. Because of other references in the book, we can also assume it was written after 663 BC.
- Nineveh (capitol of Assyria, Israel’s great enemy) was founded by Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-12) and had a long history. It was located on the east bank of the Tigris river. The city was about three miles wide and eight miles long inside the walls, but there were suburbs that extended 14 miles north and 20 miles south. When Jonah referred to a 3-day walk to get across Nineveh (Jonah 3:3) he wasn’t exaggerating. **The city was destroyed by the Babylonians, Medes and Scythians in 612 BC.** The information we have in secular history shows that Nineveh’s destruction came exactly as Nahum prophesied. The city was destroyed so completely that when Alexander the Great fought the battle of Arbela nearby in 331 BC, he did not know there had been a city there. Nineveh was never rebuilt. (Closest today is Mosul on opposite bank of river.)
- The book of Nahum carries an **interesting message to ALL nations, not just Assyria**. A great world power (in this case Assyria, with Nineveh as its capitol) had a message from God. God had sent Jonah there 140 years earlier, when they repented and were spared. But now they were right back where they were before, perhaps even worse – more brutal, more wicked. They had been given the “light” (the message of salvation) but now were in darkness. They rejected the light. It was time for destruction. We can **compare the two books of Jonah and Nahum** to see the contrasts and comparisons:



Jonah: The Mercy of God	Nahum: The Judgment of God
Approximately 800-760 B.C.	Approximately 663-612 B.C.
Disobedient prophet	Obedient prophet
Obedient Nation	Disobedient Nation - in only 150 years became so bad had to be destroyed.
Deliverance	Destruction
Repentance of Nineveh	Rebellion of Nineveh
God’s will is accomplished	God’s will is accomplished (that never changes!)

Repent (turn from wickedness to God) and be delivered from doom, or rebel in the light of the message and be destroyed. The message is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

### Highlights

The Judge Declares (Ch 1)	The Judgment Described (Ch 2)	The Justice Deserved (Chapter 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Certainty of God’s Judgment on Nineveh (1:2-15)</li> <li>▪ Because of God’s nature (<i>wrath, power, goodness: wrath to Nineveh, goodness to Israel</i>)</li> <li>▪ Because of Nineveh’s sin</li> <li>▪ Nineveh’s plotting against the Lord to end (1:9-11)</li> <li>▪ Judah’s affliction ends with Nineveh’s destruction (1:12-15)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attack (2:1-6)</li> <li>▪ Defeat, plundering (2:7-13) (<i>all very graphic</i>)</li> <li>▪ Destruction of Nineveh’s “lair”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Violence and deceit to result in shame (3:1-7)</li> <li>▪ Because of brutal conquests</li> <li>▪ Treatment of Thebes (3:8-11)</li> <li>▪ Defense efforts useless (3:12-19)</li> <li>▪ Response of the nations</li> </ul>

- **Nahum begins with God.** God is just, and wherever there is injustice, it makes Him angry. Thankfully, at least with us, He is slow to anger. His vengeance (justice) and almighty power are stressed here, as the complete destruction is announced. God can and does do whatever He wants. None can stand in His way. God’s goodness is also a focus point. In Nineveh’s case, however, the result is total destruction because of their evil. Nineveh warred against God’s people. A big mistake then, and a big mistake now.
- The **prophecies alternate between destruction of Nineveh, and restoration of Judah**, a sharp contrast. The one who was on top will be brought down. The one who is on bottom will be restored. This is how God operates. Last will be first and first will be Last. God humbles those who exalt themselves and exalts those who humble themselves.
- **Nahum vividly describes the coming battle and defeat in great detail.** Nineveh doesn’t have a chance against God’s wrath. The Babylonians, Medes and Scythians are God’s instrument at this time. All of Assyria’s wealth taken in previous conquests is now taken from her.
- Apparently the Assyrians had a **fascination with lions**. This is mentioned in Nahum as having also been “removed”: *“Where is the dwelling of the lions, And the feeding place of the young lions, Where the lion walked, the lioness and lion’s cub, And no one made them afraid?”* (2:11) Assyria is compared to a lion because of her fierce conquests and her love of lions. Nineveh was called the lion's den. This is why Nahum asks “where is the lion's den.” It won’t be found anymore.
- Nahum reminds of their conquest and destruction of Thebes (No-amon). Just as Thebes was unable to repel the attackers, Nineveh would be unable to repel their attackers. Thebes was supposedly undefeatable, and the Ninevites thought they were also. Both had great defenses, and vassal nations as allies. Nineveh would not only be unable to defend themselves, they also would not be able to depend on other nations for help. Every nation hated them for their barbarity and would rejoice in their destruction (3:19). Destruction of the Assyrian Empire brought rejoicing in every nation, including Israel.



Fulfillments of Nahum’s Prophecies: The Preciseness of Perfection of God’s Word	
Prophecies	Historical Fulfillments
<b>1: city fortresses easily captured (3:12)</b>	According to the Babylonian Chronicle the fortified towns in Nineveh’s environs began to fall in 614 BC including Tabris, present-day Sharif Khan, a few miles NW of Nineveh.
<b>2: bricks, mortar for defense (3:14)</b>	A. T. Olmstead reported: “To the south of the gate, the moat is still filled with fragments of stone and mud bricks from the walls, heaped up when they were breached” ( <i>History of Assyria</i> )
<b>3: city gates would be destroyed (3:13)</b>	“...main attack directed from NW...brunt fell upon Hatami gate at this corner... at the gate are traces of the counterwall raised by the inhabitants in their last extremity” ( <i>History of Assyria</i> )
<b>4: in final hours of attack Ninevites would be drunk (1:10; 3:11)</b>	Diodorus Siculus (ca. 20 BC) wrote, “The Assyrian king... distributed to his soldiers meats and liberals supplies of wine and provisions... While the whole army was thus carousing, the friends of Arbakes learned from some deserters of the slackness and drunkenness which prevailed in the enemy’s camp and made an unexpected attack by night” ( <i>Bibliotheca Historica</i> )
<b>5: would be destroyed by a flood (1:8; 2:6, 2:8)</b>	Diodorus also wrote that in the third year of the siege heavy rains caused a nearby river to flood part of the walls ( <i>Bibliotheca Historica</i> ). Xenophon referred to terrifying thunder associated with city’s capture ( <i>Anabasis</i> ). ( <i>flood can also mean by overwhelming military force.</i> )
<b>6: would be destroyed by fire (1:10; 2:13; 3:15)</b>	Archeological excavations at Nineveh revealed charred wood, charcoal, and ashes. “There was no question about the clear traces of the burning of the temple (as also in the palace of Sennacherib), for a layer of ash about two inches thick lay clearly defined in the places on the SE side about the level of the Sargon pavement” ( <i>A Century of Exploration at Nineveh</i> )
<b>7: city’s capture would include great massacre (3:3)</b>	“In two battles fought on the plain before the city the rebels defeated the Assyrians... So great was the multitude of the slain that following a stream, mingled with their blood, changed its color for a considerable distance” (Diodorus, <i>Bibliotheca Historica</i> ).
<b>8: plundering and pillaging (2:9-10)</b>	“Great quantities of the spoil of the city, beyond counting, they carried it off. The city ...into a mound and ruin heap” ( <i>Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia</i> )
<b>9: Ninevites would try to escape (2:8)</b>	“Sardanapalus went away his three sons and two daughters with much treasure into Paphlagonia, to the governor of Kattos, ...” (Diodorus, <i>Bibliotheca Historica</i> ).
<b>10: officers to weaken, flee (3:17)</b>	The Babylonian Chronicle states that “[The army] of Assyria deserted [lit., ran away before] the king” ( <i>Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia</i> )
<b>11: idols would be destroyed (1:14)</b>	Thompson and Hutchinson reported that the statue of the goddess Ishtar lay headless in the debris of Nineveh’s ruins ( <i>Annals of Archeology and Anthropology</i> )
<b>12: destruction final (1:9, 1:14)</b>	Many cities of the ancient Near East were rebuilt after being destroyed (e.g., Samaria, Jerusalem, Babylon) but not Nineveh.