

Nahum Chapter 2

Nineveh's fall (in 612 B.C.), at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, though still future in Nahum's day, is described vividly in present tense terms.

Nahum 2:1 "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."

"Dasheth" Assyria had made a practice of dispersing captives to many nations; now she would receive similar judgment.

"The prophet, with irony and satire, ordered the Assyrians to prepare for the coming invasion from Babylon.

Nahum tells Nineveh, that they had better prepare, because war is coming. They had been very cruel in their dealings with God's people, and now, God is sending His judgment upon them. They can prepare all they want to, but God will destroy them for their evil deeds.

Nahum 2:2 "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."

"Hath turned away" is better translated "will restore." God will restore Judah after the fall of Assyria.

"Excellency of Jacob ... Israel": This is not a reference to the southern and northern tribes, since the northern tribes had been overrun by Assyria almost a century earlier; but these are titles of honor for Judah, remembering the day when Jacob received God's blessing at Peniel (Gen. 32:27-28), and had his name changed to Israel. Together, they signify the nation's restoration to the promised position.

"Emptiers have emptied them out": Assyria had repeatedly "devastated" the land, destroying its fruitful vineyards and economic lifeblood.

This is a reminder, that it was the chastisement of God that had brought down Israel. God has not forgotten the cruelty of the Assyrians on His chosen people, and God will destroy them.

Isaiah 10:5 "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation."

This is just one Scripture about the Assyrians. Read the rest of the account (continuing on with verse 6).

Verses 3-7: The Medo-Babylonian army is composed of “mighty men”. Its favorite color was “red” or “scarlet” (Ezek. 23:14). The “shields” of the invaders were bright red and must have struck terror into the hearts of the defenders as the army approached the city.

The reference to the “gates of the rivers” may refer to the statement in the Babylonian Chronicle that the flooding river made breaches in the city wall.

“Huzzab” is unclear. It may refer to a goddess whose devotees beat their breasts because she has been taken captive. The taking of a city’s gods as spoil in battle is well attested in ancient Near Eastern literature.

Nahum 2:3 "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."

“Shield . . . made red”: Shields were either overlaid with copper, whose reflections of sunshine would make the army appear larger and strike terror in the enemy, or they were covered with hide that was dyed red, so as to extinguish fiery arrows and to minimize the sight of blood. “Scarlet” clothing would have similar benefits.

Warriors, denoting their eagerness and readiness for battle, would wave their weapons.

Nahum describes the attack on Nineveh, as if he were there. He sees blood all over the shields. The battle is so great, that even the fir trees tremble. The red in the soldiers’ garment, probably, speaks of the wrath of God upon the people against God. In the following verse, we see that red in battle speaks of taking peace away.

Revelation 6:4 "And there went out another horse [that was] red: and [power] was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword."

Nahum 2:4 "The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall justle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings."

Confusion reigned in Nineveh, where battle preparations were hurriedly made.

There were so many chariots in the street that it seemed as if the chariots were crashing into each other, and probably, they were. The swords and the chariot wheels looked like lightning, when the sun shined upon them.

Nahum 2:5 "He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defense shall be prepared."

“They shall make haste to the wall”: This may continue the thought of verse 4, depicting Nineveh’s royalty and military leaders dashing to one of her many defense towers which,

according to the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, numbered 1,500 and reached a height of 200 feet.

It is also possible that the latter part of the verse is a description of the attackers preparing to erect a “mantelet,” a small fortress type box in which soldiers rode for protection as they advance to the wall.

Recount, in the verse above, means to mark so as to be recognized. This is checking up on who he can depend upon to fight and protect them the best. Which of his soldiers have the best record? The best soldiers in the country will gather at the wall to defend the city.

Nahum 2:6 "The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved."

“Gates of the rivers”: Nineveh, lying at the confluence of three rivers (the Tigris, and two smaller rivers), constructed dams to minimize the damage of seasonal flooding to her walls. The latter part (of verse 6), suggests that these dam gates were opened, causing the walls to be dissolved and the palace to be taken.

Nahum 2:7 "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."

“Shall be led away”: The goddess of Nineveh, probably Ishtar, was taken by her attackers to demonstrate the superiority of their gods (1 Sam. 4:1-11). The temple prostitutes (“handmaids”), mourned the fate of their goddess.

"Huzzab" is, probably, not a name of a person, but is speaking of the city of Nineveh. This just speaks of Nineveh as being taken captive. The people in this city and the smaller cities around her have gone into mourning for the destruction of Nineveh. The "tabering upon their breasts", possibly, means they were beating upon their breasts, because their hearts were broken.

Nahum 2:8 "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."

“Pool of water”: Though Nineveh was like an oasis in the desert that attracted many people, they fled from the devastation.

We remember from our study in Jonah, that Nineveh was a city of over 120,000 people. Nineveh had been a city that all the nearby cities went to from time to time. They had been a beautiful city with trafficking.

The smaller cities came there for trade, and for entertainment. They do not stand. They fall to God's punishment on them. They are so thoroughly destroyed; they will not be a place of gathering again.

Nahum 2:9 "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."

“Spoil”: Spoils abounded in Nineveh, but it was her turn to be plundered.

There had been so much gold and silver in Nineveh, that some of the furniture was made of these precious metals. They had cruelly taken these precious metals, when they had attacked other surrounding countries.

Nahum 2:10 "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."

“The heart melteth”: The great city of Nineveh, lying in ruin, evoked fear and terror in those who observed it (Dan. 5:6).

Fear was so great, that it seemed as if their hearts melted. The knees smiting together was another way of showing the overwhelming fear that gripped them. Their pain was from their fear, as well. The face turning black was, probably, with the tremendous grief.

Verses 11-13: The rapacity and ferocity of the Assyrians is well documented in the annals of her cruel kings. “The lion” was the national symbol of Assyria. Here Nineveh is pictured as “the dwelling of the lions”.

“Where is”: Archeologists have found a carving from a palace showing an Assyrian king on a lion hunt. Nahum rhetorically asks where Nineveh has gone. No longer describing Nineveh’s fall, the prophet taunted her, ridiculing her fall from power and glory.

Like a pride of lions, with plenty to eat and in fear of no enemy, Nineveh ruthlessly “tore” her prey. She herself will become prey for another nation, under the sovereign direction of God. “I am against you” should be the most feared words a nation could receive from God.

Nahum 2:11 "Where [is] the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion, [even] the old lion, walked, [and] the lion's whelp, and none made [them] afraid?"

"Where is the dwelling of the lions": Nineveh, the habitation of bold, strong, and ferocious men.

"The feeding place of the young lions": Whither her victorious and rapacious generals frequently returned to consume the produce of their success. Here they walked at large, and none made them afraid. Wheresoever they turned their arms they were victors; and all nations were afraid of them.

These Assyrians were so ferocious, they were thought of as lions. When God destroyed Nineveh, it was as if He had killed the lion in his own den. The headquarters of these ferocious people was destroyed.

Nahum 2:12 "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."

"The lion did tear": This verse gives us a striking picture of the manner in which the Assyrian conquests and depredations were carried on. How many people were spoiled to enrich his whelps, his sons, princes, and nobles! How many women were stripped and slain, whose spoils went to decorate his lionesses his queen, concubines, and mistresses.

And they had even more than they could assume; their holes and dens, treasure-houses, palaces, and wardrobes; were filled with violent seizure, the riches which they got by the plunder of towns, families, and individuals. This is a very fine allegory, and admirably well supported.

This is just saying, that they were so ferocious, and so uncaring, about others, that they had taken all that had any value away from the people they fought. They were not satisfied to take enough for their needs they had stripped all the wealth away from their neighbors, and greedily kept it for themselves.

Nahum 2:13 "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."

"Burn her chariots" Nineveh, known for burning the captured cities, would receive the same fate.

"Thy messengers": The voice of the messengers who carried the edicts of the mighty king of Assyria to the captured nations would become mute.

The LORD of hosts is the same as Almighty God. Chariots, in this Scripture, are speaking of all the war materials. God destroyed all of their fighting men. They would never again, be able to pillage and destroy their neighbors and their goods.

These "messengers" were those who carried decrees from their king. The Lord destroyed all their weapons of war, and destroyed the city as well.

Nahum Chapter 2 Questions

1. Nahum tells _____ that they had better prepare.
2. They had been _____ in their dealings with God's people.
3. What had really brought down Israel?
4. The shield of his mighty men is turned _____.
5. How does Nahum describe the attack on Nineveh?

6. There were so many chariots in the street, it seemed they were doing what?
7. What does "recount" in verse 5 mean?
8. Who fought in Nineveh?
9. What is the river in verse 6?
10. "Huzzab" is, probably, who?
11. Why were people in the nearby cities mourning?
12. How many people were in Nineveh?
13. What happens to their gold and silver?
14. Where had they gotten it?
15. There had been so much gold and silver, that their _____ was made of it.
16. How was their fear described?
17. Why were they called lions?
18. When God destroyed Nineveh, it was as if He had killed the _____ in his own den.
19. The LORD of hosts is the same as _____.
20. Who were the "messengers"?