

Nahum Chapter 3

Verses 1-6: Nineveh is called the “bloody city” and is pictured as a “harlot” whose “witchcrafts” and “whoredoms” shall be brought down to the dust. “Discover” means to “uncover.” Thus, Nineveh shall be exposed for what she is: the “mistress” of the “nations.”

The prophet Nahum, asserting that the destruction of Nineveh was justly deserved, makes 3 charges against her (verses 1, 4, 8-10).

Nahum 3:1 "Woe to the bloody city! it [is] all full of lies [and] robbery; the prey departeth not;"

“Blood city”: The first accusation was a charge well documented in history. Assyria proved to be an unusually cruel, blood-thirsty nation.

“Lies”: Assyria employed falsehood and treachery to subdue her enemies (2 Kings 18:28-32).

“Robbery” (see 2:11-12). Preying upon her victims, she filled her cities with the goods of other nations.

In the last lesson, we saw the punishment that God brought upon Nineveh. In this lesson, we see some of the reasons why God judged them so harshly. They were ruthless people, and they killed people without reason. They are called bloody, because of all the innocent blood they shed.

They were not satisfied with their own wealth, but cheated and stole to get what belonged to others. They looted the countries that they took of all of their wealth.

Verses 2-3: These verses reach back to the scene portrayed (in 2:3-5). Assyria was so overrun that she is filled with corpses, causing the defenders to stumble over them.

Nahum 3:2 "The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots."

Woe to the bloody city! Nineveh: the threatening against which are continued in a strain of invective, astonishing for its richness, variety, and energy. One may hear and see the whip crack, the horses prancing, the wheels rumbling, the chariots bounding after the galloping steeds.

What a picture, and a true representation of a battle, when one side is broken, and all the cavalry of the conqueror fall in upon them, hewing them down with their swords, trampling them to pieces under the hoofs of their horses! War, yet sometimes thou art the scourge of the Lord.

The noise of the army was accompanied by the whip cracking over the back of the horses, and the rattling of the chariot wheels. The prancing horses were speaking of the horses pulling the chariots. The chariots were coming so fast, they would jump up in the air, when they hit a bump.

Nahum 3:3 "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:"

The reflection from the drawn and highly polished swords; and the hurled spears, like gashes of lightning, dazzling the eyes; the slain lying in heaps, and horses and chariots stumbling over them!

"The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear": Or, "the flame of the sword and the glittering spear". They ride with a drawn sword, which, being brandished to and fro, looks like a flame of fire; or with a spear made of polished iron, or steel, which, when vibrated and moved to and fro, glitters like lightning.

A large number of which, entering the city must be terrible to the inhabitants of it.

"And there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses": Of dead men lying in the streets, pierced and slain with the bright sword and glittering spear of the Medes and Chaldeans.

"And there is none end of their corpses": The number of them could not be told; they lay so thick in all parts of the city, that there was no telling them.

"They stumble upon their corpses": The Ninevites in fleeing, and endeavoring to make their escape, and the Medes and Chaldeans pursuing them.

This is speaking of so many being killed in battle that the horses and chariots just ride right over the dead bodies. The glittering spear and sword means they have been shined up for battle.

Nahum 3:4 "Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well favored harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts."

The second charge against Nineveh was spiritual and moral harlotry. The nation was likened to a beautiful prostitute who seduced the nations with her illicit enticements.

"Whoredoms", in the spirit, are speaking of idolatry. It is unusual to speak of it in that nature with these people who had always been idolaters, but the worship of false gods was a sin, whether they were heathen, or Jewish.

Their Worship was of a sensual nature and whoredom in the physical was part of it. They practiced sorcery and witchcraft, as well. They conquered other countries and drug them into their idolatrous way of life. There was really nothing good that could be said about their mode of worship.

Verses 5-6: Nineveh would be publicly exposed, resulting in shame and humiliation.

Nahum 3:5 "Behold, I [am] against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame."

"Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts": Because her doings were against him (see Nahum 2:13).

"And I will discover thy skirts upon thy face": Turn up the skirts of her garments over her head, and thereby discover what should be concealed, than which nothing is more disagreeable and abominable to modest persons. It is here threatened she should be used in character as a harlot, or as women oftentimes are by rude soldiers, when a city is taken by them.

"And I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame": All her charms shall be taken away and she became odious as a harlot to her former lovers. All her impostures, arts, and tricks, and shameful actions, will be discovered.

Her aims and views at universal monarchy will be seen and her weakness to effect it made to appear. Upon the whole, she will become the object of the scorn and derision of kingdoms and nations.

This is just saying that God would not only destroy her, but humiliate her in the process. He would expose her shameful ways as an example of what would happen to others who did such terrible things.

Nahum 3:6 "And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock."

"And I will cast abominable filth upon thee": like a weight, that what thou wouldest not take heed to as sin, thou mayest feel in punishment.

Abominable things had God seen (Jer. 13:27), in her doings; with abominable things would he punish her.

Man was pleased to sin, and forget it as a thing past. "God maketh him to possess the iniquities of his youth" (Job 13:26), and binds them around him, so that they make him to appear what they are, "vile".

Psalm 50:21 "These things hast thou done and I kept silence".

I will reprove thee and set them in order before thine eyes. "And will set thee as a gazingstock": that all, while they gaze at thee, take warning from thee (compare 2 Chronicles 7:20).

Ezek. 28:17 "I will cast thee to the ground; I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee."

Whoever does not amend on occasion of others, others shall be amended on occasion of him.

This whole land will be a public spectacle, and all of her abominations would be out where they could be seen. Her punishments would be public, too.

Nahum 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?"

"Nineveh is laid waste": Instead of mourning, there would be rejoicing at her fall. None would be found to comfort her; she would bear her misery alone.

The prophet predicts the ultimate destruction of mighty Nineveh in the prophetic present: "Nineveh is laid waste."

No one wanted to be associated with her. They were afraid God would think they were caught up in her sins. They fled away from her, to prove they had no association with her. No one would comfort her.

Verses 8-10: Nahum sets forth the third and final charge against Nineveh: they hadn't learned from No-amon, also known as Thebes.

No-amon was the great capital of southern Egypt, 400 miles south of Cairo. One of the most magnificent ancient civilizations of the world, it was renowned for its 100 gates, a temple measuring 330 feet long and 170 feet wide, and its network of canals.

It fell to Ashurbanipal of Assyria (in 663 B.C.). Like No-amon by the Nile, Nineveh was situated by the Tigris River, enjoying the security of conquered nations around her. However, her end would be like that of No-amon.

Nahum 3:8 "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?"

The reference to "populous No" should be translated "No-amon" (city of Amun), known to Greeks as Thebes and today as Luxor. It was the capital of the Eighteenth through Twentieth Dynasties of "Egypt"; and was the favorite burial place of the Pharaohs of that period.

Thebes, however, fell to the Assyrians (in 663 B.C.), and served as an appropriate warning to the people of Nineveh.

No worshipped the solar god Amon. They were worshipping false gods, as well as Nineveh was. It was a large populated city also. We can see in the following Scriptures, that No is destroyed like Nineveh for the same sins.

Jeremiah 46:25-26 "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:" "And I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants: and afterward it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the LORD."

No was an unwallled city, with the sea as her protection from attack. Worship of false gods brought the destruction of No, as it did of Nineveh.

Nahum 3:9 "Ethiopia and Egypt [were] her strength, and [it was] infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers."

"Ethiopia ... Egypt ... Lubim": No-amon was well protected on all sides, nestled between lower Egypt on the north and Ethiopia on the south. The location of Put is best identified in the general vicinity of North Africa.

Josephus says that Put, the third son of Ham (Gen. 10:6), was the founder of Libya. "Put and "Lubim" refer to the districts of Libya.

"Lubim" is speaking of the Libyans. These were a confederate, and all of them were evil. They all worshipped false gods. In a sense, they all symbolized the unsaved world.

Nahum 3:10 "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 honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains."

"Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity": Not by Nebuchadnezzar; though this city was afterwards taken, and its inhabitants carried captive, by that monarch, as was foretold (Jer. 46:25).

But the prophet here does not predict an event to be accomplished, and instance in that, and argue from it. Which could have no effect on Nineveh and its inhabitants, or be an example or terror to them.

But refers to what had been done, a recent fact, and which they were well acquainted with. Aben Ezra says, this city No was a city of the land of Egypt, which the king of the Chaldeans took as he went to Nineveh. But when, and by whom it was taken, is nowhere said.

"Her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets": Against the walls of the houses, or upon the stones and pavements of the streets. Which cruelties were often used by conquerors upon innocent babes at the sacking of cities (Psalm 137:9).

"And they cast lots for her honorable men": The soldiers did, who should have them, and sell them for slaves; which was done without any regard to their birth and breeding (Joel 3:3).

"And all her great men were bound in chains": As nobles may be meant by "honorable men", by "great men" may be designed the gentry, merchants, and others. These were taken and bound in iron chains, handcuffed, or tied together, and so led captive into a foreign land. And Nineveh might expect the same treatment.

The great sins of No brought great destruction, as it had on Nineveh. The size of both of these cities was great, but God does not look at their size. He looks at their sins. They brought the judgment of God upon themselves.

Nahum 3:11 "Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy."

"Drunken": As predicted (1:10), Nineveh would be made to drink of God's wrath, making her drunk and defenseless to His judgment.

This has returned to speaking of Nineveh. God's wrath will be poured on Nineveh, as it was on No. They can hide in their strong drink, but it will not save them.

Verses 12-13: Nahum employed a series of metaphors to emphasize that Nineveh's strong defenses would be easily overrun. Their walls would be like ripe fruit that falls at the slightest shaking and their battle forces like weak women.

Nahum 3:12 "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."

"All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the first ripe figs": Upon them, or like them: "and the first ripe figs"; which are easily shook and gathered; and so easily should the fortresses and towers of Nineveh, in which they trusted for safety, be taken by the enemy, not only one, but all of them.

"If they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater": As such ripe fruit is very desirable, and the mouth of a man is open and ready for them. So, if he gives the tree but the least shake, they will fall into his mouth or about him in great plenty.

In like manner, as the fortresses of Nineveh, being of importance, were desirable by the Chaldeans and Medes, and for which they were gaping. So, upon the least assault they would fall into their hands (see Rev. 6:13).

Just as it is easy to shake ripe fruit from the tree, the strong holds will be easily turned over. They will not stand.

Nahum 3:13 "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."

"Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women": Or like women, weak and feeble, fearful and timorous. Frightened at the first approach of the enemy and run away. And run up and down in the utmost consternation and distress, having neither skill nor courage to oppose them.

Some regard may be had to the effeminacy of their king (see Nahum 2:7). The sense is, they should be at once dispirited, and lose all strength of mind and body. And have neither heads nor hearts to form schemes, and execute them in their own defense.

And thus, should they be, even in the midst of the city, upon their own ground. Where anywhere, it might be thought they would exert themselves, and play the man, since everything lay at stake. This was another thing they trusted in, the multitude of their people, even of their soldiers. But these would be of no avail, since they would lose all their military skill and bravery.

"The gates of thy land shall be set wide open to thine enemies": Instead of guarding the passes and avenues, they would abandon them to the enemy. And, instead of securing the gates and passages, they would run away from them. And the enemy would find as easy access as if they were thrown open on purpose for them.

Perhaps this may respect the gates of the rivers being opened by the inundation, which threw down the wall, and made a way into the city (see Nahum 2:6).

"The fire shall devour thy bars": With which their gates had been shut, but now opened, and in the enemies' hands. Who would set fire to them, that the way to go in and out might be open and free.

This is not speaking of females, but of men who are as weak as women. The gates open wide let the invaders in. The bars that the gates were closed with have been burned, and are gone. It was no trouble for the enemy to just walk in and take them.

Verses 14-15: The prophet taunted the people with sarcasm, urging them to prepare for battle, to fortify the city's defenses, only to be destroyed. As the locust leaves nothing, stripping all the foliage, so there would be nothing left of Nineveh (Amos 7:1).

Nahum 3:14 "Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln."

"Draw thee waters for the siege": Before the siege is begun, fetch water from the river, wells, or fountains without the city, and fill cisterns, and such like receptacles of water, with them. That there may be sufficiency of it to hold out, which is often wanting in long sieges.

The want of which gives great distress to the besieged. This is put for all necessary provisions, which should be made when a city is in danger of being blocked up. This, and what follows, are said ironically; signifying, let them do what they would or could for their support and security, it would be all in vain.

"Fortify thy strong holds": Repair the old fortifications, and add new ones to them. Fill them with soldiers, arms, and ammunition.

"Go into clay, and tread the mortar; make strong the brickkiln": Repair the brickkilns, keep them in good order. Employ men in digging clay, and treading it, and making it into bricks, and burning them in the kiln, that there be no want of bricks to repair the fortifications. Or such breaches as might be made by the enemy.

Bricks were much used instead of stone in those countries; but when they had done their utmost, they would not be able to secure themselves, and keep out the enemy.

Nahum is warning them that the battle is now. They must draw water to drink. Making the brick walls and buildings even stronger would be good, if this battle was not ordained of God. God has judged them and all the preparation they can make will not be enough.

Nahum 3:15 "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."

"Shall the fire devour thee": All is toil within, the fire of God's wrath falls and consumes at once. Mankind still, with mire and clay; build themselves Babels. They go into clay, and become themselves earthly like the mire they steep themselves in.

They make themselves strong, as though they thought "that their houses shall continue forever" (Psalm 49:11). And say, "So, take thine ease eat, drink and be merry" (Luke 12:19-20). God's wrath descends. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee".

"It shall eat thee up like the cankerworm." What in thee is strongest shall be devoured with as much ease as the locust devours the tender grass. The judgments of God, not only overwhelm as a whole, but find each tender part, as the locust devours each single blade.

"Make thyself many as the cankerworm": As though thou wouldst equal thyself in oppressive number to those instruments of the vengeance of God, gathering from all quarters armies to help thee; yea, though thou make thy whole self into one oppressive multitude, yet it shall not avail thee. Nay, He saith, thou hast attempted to do it.

This fire is sent by God, it destroys everything before it. Those who do not die in battle will be destroyed, because there will be no food. The locusts have eaten the food.

Nahum 3:16 "Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away."

“Multiplied thy merchants”: Nineveh had increased her traders, or merchants, bringing immense wealth, which is just more to destroy.

As we said in an earlier lesson, this had been a trade center to many cities around Nineveh. There will be no merchants left after this war. They will be destroyed from within.

Nahum 3:17 "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]."

“Great grasshoppers”: Not only was Nineveh’s commercial strength gone (verse 16), but her governing resources disappeared as well. After camping for the night within the massive walls of this great citadel, the locusts, depicting Assyria’s leadership, flew away with the first rays of warm sunshine in search of food.

The "crowned" are speaking of those who were in authority. It appears, they had run in and took what they could, from other countries they had conquered, and had run away.

There were many high officials. Their actions were done secretly. They are not equipped to fight, all they know how to do is take something someone else has worked for. They are helpless, in battle, to save Nineveh.

Verses 18-19: The destiny of Nineveh was certain. She had received the death blow; she would not recover. And all who hear of it would rejoice. Assyria had devastated the nations with her atrocities and cruelties; the news of her downfall brought happiness and mirth among the nations.

Nahum 3:18 "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]."

“The shepherds slumber ... dwell in the dust”: The Assyrian leaders and army, described in terms of exhaustion and sleep, were dead; the people were scattered. There were none left to help against the invasion of the Babylonians, to whom they fell (in 612 B.C.).

Those who were to be caring for the people, are some of the first to be killed, and they have no shepherd to lead them. The people, without a leader, scatter for safety.

Nahum 3:19 "[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?"

"There is no healing of thy bruise": Made by the fatal blow given to the empire by the taking of Nineveh. The ruin of it was irreparable and irrecoverable. The city of Nineveh was no more, and the Assyrian empire sunk, and never rose again. Or, "there is no contraction of thy bruise"; as when a wound is healed, or near it, the skin round about is wrinkled and contracted.

"All that hear the bruit of thee": The news, the report of the destruction of Nineveh, and of the ruin of the Assyrian empire, and the king of it.

"Shall clap the hands over thee": For joy; so far were they from lending a helping hand in the time of distress, that they clapped both hands together, to express the gladness of their hearts at hearing such news.

"For upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" to which of thy neighbors hast thou not been troublesome and injurious? Which of them hast thou not oppressed, and used with violence and cruelty? What province or city but have felt the weight of thine hand, have been harassed with wars, and distressed with tributes and exactions?

This injury to Nineveh will not be healed. All of those who Nineveh had abused are tickled at her destruction. They are so glad; they clap their hands in joy. They had been so cruel to others that no one really cared that they were destroyed. They had sown wickedness, and now, they were reaping their evil rewards.

Nahum Chapter 3 Questions

1. What is Nineveh called in verse 1?
2. Why were they called by that name?
3. What was the noise of the whip?
4. What is verse 3 speaking of?
5. "Whoredoms", in the spiritual sense, are speaking of what?
6. They practiced _____ and _____, as well.
7. What does Nahum mean by "discover thy skirts upon thy face"?
8. And I will cast _____ filth upon thee.
9. Why did all who looked on flee?
10. What sin was in the city of No?
11. What did No have in common with Nineveh?
12. What false god did they worship at No?
13. What protected No, if they were an unwalled city?
14. Who is "Lubim" speaking of?

15. What did Egypt, Ethiopia, and Libya have in common?
16. They all symbolize the _____.
17. What horrible thing happened to the children of No?
18. What did they try to hide in?
19. How were their strong holds like ripe fig trees?
20. Who were the women, in verse 13, speaking of?
21. What is Nahum warning them of in verse 14?
22. What were some of the ways they would be destroyed?
23. The merchants tell us they were a _____ center.
24. Who are the "crowned" speaking of?
25. Thy shepherds _____.
26. Who were some of the first to be killed?
27. What happens to the people without a leader?
28. The injury of Nineveh will _____ be healed.
29. What reaction did their neighboring countries have to Nineveh's fall?