

INTRO:

- It was late 800s BC, and Assyrian King Ashurnasirpal II (883–859) boastfully wrote the following in his military records:

“I stormed the mountain peaks and took them. In the midst of the mighty mountain I slaughtered them; with their blood I dyed the mountain red like wool.... The heads of their warriors I cut off, and I formed them into a pillar over against their city; their young men and their maidens I burned in the fire” (Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 1:148).

“I flayed [him], his skin I spread upon the wall of the city ...”

- Ashurnasirpal’s successor, Shalmaneser II (859–824) bragged about his brutality:

“A pyramid of heads I reared in front of his city. Their youths and their maidens I burnt up in the flames” (ibid., 1:213).

- Later, about 50-60 years after Nineveh’s revival from the book of Jonah, Sennacherib (705–681) ascended Assyria’s throne. He wrote of one of his victories:

“I cut their throats like lambs. I cut off their precious lives [as one cuts] a string. Like the many waters of a storm I made [the contents of] their gullets and entrails run down upon the wide earth.... Their hands I cut off” (ibid., 2:127).<sup>2</sup>

## Nahum

- Meaning:

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<sup>1</sup> Notes prepared with help of The Master’s Seminary BI 501 Bible Survey syllabus.

<sup>2</sup> Elliott E. Johnson, “Nahum,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1494.

➤ Date:

a. Outline

1. The Title (1:1)
2. The Certainty of God's Judgment on Nineveh (1:2-15)
  - A. God's wrath to be extended to Nineveh and His goodness to His own (1:2-8)
  - B. Nineveh's plotting against the Lord to come to an end (1:9-11)
  - C. Judah's affliction to end because of Nineveh's destruction (1:12-15)
3. The Description of God's Judgment on Nineveh (2)
  - A. The attack (2:1-6)
  - B. The defeat and the plundering (2:7-13)
4. The Reasons for God's Judgment on Nineveh (3)

b. Major Themes

- 1) The City of Nineveh (1:1; 2:8; 3:7)

✚ Nineveh's history dates to Nimrod in Genesis 10.

✚ Elliott Johnson: "Inscriptions refer to Gudea restoring the temple of the goddess Ishtar in Nineveh, which he said was founded around 2300 B.C. Hammurabi, king of Babylon (ca. 1792-1750 B.C.), referred to Nineveh. The town was expanded by the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser I (1115-1071), who referred to himself as "king of the world." *Ashurnasirpal II* (883-859) and Sargon II (722-705) had their palace in Nineveh. In the ninth, eighth and seventh centuries B.C. the Assyrian Empire became strong and repeatedly attacked nations to the east, north, and west, including Israel."

✠ One writer: “Nineveh was the capital of one of the cruelest, vilest, most powerful, and most idolatrous empires in the world” (E. Johnson, BKC)

- But God’s judgment was also about the Abr Covenant: “I will bless those who bless you & curse those who curse you” (Gen 12:3)
  
- Assyria / Shalmaneser V (727–722) besieged Samaria and defeated it in 722 B.C., thus defeating the Northern 10 tribes of Israel (2 Kings 17:3–6; 18:9–10).
  
- 21 years later (in 701), Sennacherib/ Assyria (705–681) invaded Judah and destroyed 46 Judean towns and cities (BKC)

“Shalmaneser III (859–824 B.C.) made the city of Nineveh a base for military operations. During his reign Israel came into contact with Nineveh. He wrote that he fought a coalition of kings of Aram and others including “Ahab the Israelite” (in 853 B.C.). Later he wrote that he received tribute from “Jehu, son of Omri,” who is pictured in the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser” (BKC, 1:1493).

2:4–10 “The chariots race madly in the streets, they rush wildly in the squares, their appearance is like torches, they dash to and fro like lightning flashes. <sup>5</sup> He remembers his nobles; They stumble in their march, they hurry to her wall, and the mantelet is set up. <sup>6</sup> The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved. <sup>7</sup> It is fixed: She is stripped, she is carried away, and her handmaids are moaning like the sound of doves, beating on their breasts. <sup>8</sup> Though Nineveh *was* like a pool of water throughout her days, now they are fleeing; “Stop, stop,” But no one turns back. <sup>9</sup> Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! For there is no limit to the treasure – Wealth from every kind of desirable object. <sup>10</sup> She is emptied! Yes, she is desolate and waste! Hearts are melting and knees knocking! Also anguish is in the whole body, and all their faces are grown pale!”

2) The Fulfillments of Nahum's Prophecies

- The astonishing precision of these prophecies:

**Nahum's Prophecies**

**Historical Fulfillments**

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| 1. The Assyrian fortresses surrounding the city would be easily captured (3:12).              | 1. According to the Babylonian Chronicle the fortified towns in Nineveh's environs began to fall in 614 B.C. including Tabris, present-day Sharif-Khan, a few miles northwest of Nineveh.  |
| 2. The besieged Ninevites would prepare bricks and mortar for emergency defense walls (3:14). | 2. A.T. Olmstead reported: "To the south of the gate, the moat is still filled with fragments of stone and of mud bricks from the walls, heaped up when they were breached" ( <i>History of Assyria</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951, p. 637).   |
| 3. The city gates would be destroyed (3:13).  | 3. Olmstead noted: "The main attack was directed from the northwest and the brunt fell upon the Hatamti gate at this corner ... Within the gate are traces of the counter wall raised by the inhabitants in their last extremity" ( <i>History of Assyria</i> , p. 637).   |
| 4. In the final hours of the attack the Ninevites would be drunk (1:10; 3:11)                 | 4. Diodorus Siculus (ca. 20 B.C.) wrote, "The Assyrian king ... distributed to his soldiers meats and liberal 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”  
(*Bibliotheca Historica* 2. 26. 4)

5. Nineveh would be destroyed by a flood (1:8; 2:6, 8).
5. Diodorus wrote that in the third year of the siege heavy rains caused a nearby river to flood part of the city and break part of the walls (*Bibliotheca Historica* 2. 26. 9; 2. 27.3). Xenophon referred to terrifying thunder (presumably with a storm) associated with the city’s capture (*Anabasis*, 3. 4. 12). Also the Khosr River, entering the city from the northwest at the Ninlil Gate and running through the city in a southwesterly direction, may have flooded because of heavy rains, or the enemy may have destroyed its sluice gate.
6. Nineveh would be destroyed by fire (1:10; 2:13; 3:15).
6. Archeological excavations at Nineveh have revealed charred wood, charcoal, and ashes. “There was no question about the clear traces of burning of the temple (as also in the palace of Sennacherib), for a layer of ash about two inches thick lay clearly defined in places on the southeast side about the level of the Sargon pavement” (R. Campbell Thompson and R.W. Hutchinson, *A Century of Exploration at Nineveh*. London: Luzac, 1929, pp. 45, 77).
7. The city’s capture would be attended by a great massacre of people (3:3).
7. “In two battles fought on the plain before the city the rebels defeated the Assyrians ... so great was the multitude of the slain that the flowing stream, mingled with their blood, changed its color for a

considerable distance” (Diodorus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 2. 26. 6–7).

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| <p>8. Plundering and pillaging would accompany the overthrow of the city (2:9–10).</p> | <p>8. According to the Babylonian Chronicle, “Great quantities of spoil from the city, beyond counting, they carried off. The city [they turned] into a mound and ruin heap” (Luckenbill, <i>Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia</i>, 2:420).</p>                                      |
| <p>9. When Nineveh would be captured its people would try to escape (2:8)</p>          | <p>9. “Sardanapalus [another name for king Sin-shar-ishkun] sent away his three sons and two daughters with much treasure into Paphlagonia, to the governor of Kattos, the most loyal of his subjects” (Diodorus, <i>Bibliotheca Historica</i>, 2. 26. 8</p>                                |
| <p>10. The Ninevite officers would weaken and flee (3:17).</p>                         | <p>10. The Babylonian Chronicle states that “[The army] of Assyria deserted [lit., ran away before] the king” (Luckenbill, <i>Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia</i>, 2:420).</p>   |
| <p>11. Nineveh’s images and idols would be destroyed (1:14).</p>                       | <p>11. R. Campbell Thompson and R.W. Hutchinson reported that the statue of the goddess Ishtar lay headless in the debris of Nineveh’s ruins (“The British Museum Excavations on the Temple of Ishtar at Nineveh, 1930–1,” <i>Annals of Archeology and Anthropology</i>. 19, pp. 55–6).</p> |
| <p>12. Nineveh’s destruction would be final (1:9, 14).</p>                             | <p>12. Many cities of the ancient Near East were rebuilt after being destroyed (e.g., Samaria, Jerusalem, Babylon) but not Nineveh.<sup>1</sup></p>   |

3) The Patience of Yahweh in Judgment

4) Yahweh's Judgment of the Nations (1:2-8; 3:8-10)

c. Purpose: After much patience, Yahweh would judge Nineveh for her cruel acts and immoral deeds.

d. Bibliography

- 1) Barker & Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah* (NAC)
- 2) John MacArthur, *Jonah & Nahum: Grace in the Midst of Judgment*
- 3) Elliott Johnson, *Nahum*, Bible Knowledge Commentary