

Chapter XII—*Questions*

Introduction

1. Jonah prophesied to Nineveh about _____ years before Nahum.
2. How do you explain God's destruction of Nineveh in view of her repentance at Jonah's preaching?
3. What two phrases in Nahum 1:1 establish the work as inspired Scripture?
4. God assures His faithful and loyal people of His _____ and at the same time He pronounces His wrath against Nineveh.
5. What had been Nineveh's past dealing with Israel?
6. Comment on the idea that God is a jealous God.
7. Explain "*Jehovah is full of wrath.*"
8. In light of Nahum 1:3(b)-7 discuss the power of God.
9. What is meant by the overrunning flood in *Nahum 1:8*?
10. Show how Nineveh's attempts at self-defense were to prove futile.
11. What sort of person was Sennacherib?
12. What was to become of the gods Nineveh worshipped?
13. Discuss (1:15) "Behold upon the mountain."
14. Discuss (1:15) "keep thy feasts . . . perform thy vows."

CHAPTER XIII

DETAILS OF NINEVEH'S DOWNFALL

WARNING OF WAR . . . Nahum 2:1-7

RV . . . He that dasheth in pieces is come up against thee; keep the fortress, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily. For Jehovah restoreth the excellency of Jacob as the excellency of Israel; for the emptiers have emptied them out, and destroyed their vine-branches. The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots flash with steel in the day of his preparation, and the cypress spears are brandished. The chariots rage in the streets; they rush to and fro in the broad ways: the appearance of them is like torches; they run like the lightnings. He remembereth his nobles: they stumble in their march; they make haste to the wall thereof, and the mantelet is prepared. The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved. And it is decreed: she is uncovered, she is carried away; and her handmaids moan as with the voice of doves, beating upon their breasts.

LXX . . . It is all over with him, he has been removed, one who has been delivered from affliction has come up panting into thy presence, watch the way, strengthen thy loins, be very valiant in thy strength. For the Lord has turned aside the pride of Jacob, as the pride of Israel: for they have utterly rejected them, and have destroyed their branches. They have destroyed the arms of their power from among men, their mighty men sporting with fire: the reins of their chariots shall be destroyed in the day of his preparation, and the horsemen shall be thrown into confusion in the ways, and the chariots shall clash together, and shall be entangled in each other in the broad ways: their appearance is as lamps of fire, and as gleaming lightnings. And their mighty men shall bethink themselves and flee by day; and they shall be weak as they go; and they shall hasten to her walls, and shall prepare their defences. The gates of the cities have been opened, and the palaces have fallen into ruin, and the foundation has been exposed; and she has gone up, and her maid-servants were led away as doves moaning in their hearts.

COMMENTS

HE THAT DASHETH IN PIECES . . . v. 1

The destroyer is at the gates! In his prophetic vision, Nahum shouts the alarm to Nineveh as he sees the soldiers of Babylon's Nebuchadnezzar, allied with those of the Median Cyaxares (or Ahasuerus) approach the very gates of the city.

Destruction is neither distant nor doubtful. Nebuchadnezzar well deserved his common title: he who dashes nations in pieces. *Jeremiah* 50:23 calls Babylon the *hammer of the whole earth*.

There is to be no subtlety. The smasher has "come before thy face" in a straight forward attack. Nineveh is therefore called upon to man the towers and magazines and guard the avenues of the city, to encourage her troops and animate herself. There is no way to forestall the stroke of God's judgement. Just as Assyria was used of God to chastise His people, so the Medo-Babylonian alliance will now punish Nineveh.

Will Durant, in his epic *Story of Civilization*, says, ". . . Assyrian history is largely a picture of cities sacked and villages or fields laid waste . . . the weakness of Oriental monarchies was bound up with this addiction to violence." Nineveh's conquerers were simply repaying her in kind.

(Verse two) This verse is something of an enigma. Assyria had

been used of God to chasten His people. Now that very activity is published as the manifesto showing the causes of her downfall. We can only understand this by bearing the covenant in mind.

All God has done in human history He has done for the sake of His covenant purpose to ultimately bless all people. The Jews erred in considering national prosperity to be excellence before God. It was never so. God is concerned that His people be faithful. He restores their real excellence by punishing their unfaithfulness. Assyria, who had been used of God to so correct Israel, *ie.* restore the excellency, is now being destroyed by those who will later punish Judah.

The Assyrian policy of "scorched earth" against her enemies had earned her the title "the emptiers."

THE SHIELDS . . . MADE RED . . . v. 3

Here we begin the prophet's poetic account of the terrors of the invading enemy. Their shields are red with Assyrian blood. The men themselves are drenched scarlet with the gore of battle.

As the chariots approached the city, their charge was swift as lightning and their wheels struck sparks upon the stones.

The spears of the Medes and Babylonians are like a shaking forest of fir trees. As a mighty tree overtops a shrub, so the attackers overwhelm the defenders of Nineveh.

CHARIOTS RAGE IN THE STREETS . . . v. 4

The walls are breached . . . the gates are opened and the vehicles of war charge through the defenseless city streets. They are so numerous and driven with such fury that the red tunics of their drivers seem to be the flames of torches and the burning of the city begins.

Much of Nahum's poetic vividness borrows from the literal appearance of the attackers. The dashing in pieces previously alluded to no doubt figures the instruments used to break down the stone and brick walls of the besieged city. The hammer-headed battle-axes of the Medo-Babylonian troops could crush a man's head with even a glancing blow.

The red and scarlet of the bloody attackers was partly due to their uniforms of the same color. This color also would add to the fiery appearance of the chariots.

HE REMEMBERETH HIS NOBLES . . . v. 5

Nebuchadnezzar's commanders, here called nobles, are mustered and commanded to take the field immediately. So swiftly do they obey that they stumble over the bloody stone streets. They hasten to secure the walls that are now approached by their troops.

The mantelet was a portable shield under which the invader was protected from the besieged defenders on the walls above.

THE GATES OF THE RIVER ARE OPENED . . . v. 6-7

At length the gates of the rivers would be opened. The western defense of Nineveh was the wall along the Tigris river. It was 4,530 yards long and connected to moats on the east, north and south sides of the city.

The Medo-Babylonian army engineers re-routed the river channel and the moats became a dry bed of march into the city. Cyrus would later turn the same trick against its Babylonian originators and so defeat Belshazzar.

Finally the defense of the palace itself dissolves and the Assyrian capital is no more. There remains only the moans of the captives and the doves, like the larks bravely singing over Flanders Field, flap their wings over desolation and death.

THE RUINS OF WAR . . . Nahum 2:8-13

RV . . . But Nineveh hath been from old like a pool of water: yet they flee away. Stand, stand, they cry; but none looketh back. Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold; for there is no end of the store, the glory of all goodly furniture. She is empty, and void, and waste; and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and anguish is in all loins, and the faces of them all are waxed pale. Where is the den of the lions, and the feeding-place of the young lions, where the lion and the lioness walked, the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid? The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his caves with prey, and his dens with ravin. Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah 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.

LXX . . . And as for Nineve, her waters shall be as a pool of water: and they fled, and staid not, and there was none to look back. They plundered the silver, they plundered the gold, and there was no end of their adorning; they were loaded with it upon all their pleasant vessels. There is thrusting forth, and shaking, and tumult, and heart-breaking, and loosing of knees, and pangs on all loins; and the faces of all are as the blackening of a pot. Where is the dwelling-place of the lions, and the pasture that belonged to the whelps? where did the lion go,

that the lion's whelp should enter in there, and there was none to scare him away? The lion seized enough prey for his whelps, and strangled for his young lions, and filled his lair with prey, and his dwelling-place with spoil. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord Almighty, and I will burn up thy multitude in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy lions; and I will utterly destroy thy prey from off the land, and thy deeds shall no more at all be heard of.

COMMENTS

... BUT NONE SHALL LOOK BACK ... v. 8

As with modern, so with ancient warfare, a stream of refugees poured from the fallen city of Nineveh with no idea where to go. The call to them to stay is in vain. Hollow-eyed, they stumble away from all that has ever been home.

Nineveh has always been populace . . . as stated by Nahum's picturesque description of her as a pool, the figure of water to symbolize a multitude is a common one. (Cp. *Revelation 17:5*)

A century earlier, in Jonah's time, the population of the Assyrian capital was estimated as including 120,000 small children. (*Jonah 4:11*)

Now, in defeat, the multitude flee. The commanders cry for them to return, but they will not so much as look back. Their one thought is escape.

TAKE THE SPOIL ... v. 9-12

Andrew Jackson is quoted in American history as saying "to the victors belong the spoils." The Medes and Babylonians, and every other invading army to march through the pages of history, agree.

The wealth of the city becomes the prey of its conquerors. The officers stir up their troops to make a thorough job of looting. Nineveh was rich, and the chief source of income to the ancient man of war was such loot.

The Assyrian lion will no longer ravage the world in search of prey for his lioness and her whelps. The poetic symbolism is obvious. The destruction of Nineveh with her armies and chariots will forever prevent her from preying as a wild animal upon the victims of her greed for empire.

BEHOLD I AM AGAINST THEE ... v. 13

The prophet is careful to point out that the sack of Nineveh is carried out at the will of Jehovah. It must be pointed out here that

this is a strange idea to the people of the prophet's time. Each nation had its own gods and they were credited with that nation's victories over her enemies. It is not, however, the gods of the Medes and Babylonians to whom Nahum credits the fall of Nineveh. It is Jehovah of Israel!

Perhaps Nahum saw, as did Micah, Isaiah and the others that Jehovah is not only the one true God, but that He is Lord of *all* nations.

Chapter XII—Questions

Details of Nineveh's Downfall

1. In a prophetic vision, Nahum saw Babylon's _____ and the armies of the Median _____ at the very gates of Nineveh.
2. Nebuchadnezzar's common title _____ was well-deserved.
3. What sort of attack did the Medo-Babylonian alliance launch against Nineveh?
4. We can only understand God's punishing of Assyria for destroying Israel, the purpose for which He had raised up Assyria, by remembering _____.
5. In warfare Assyria had practiced a _____ policy.
6. How does Nahum describe the chariot charge against Nineveh?
7. Much of Nahum's poetic vividness is borrowed from _____.
8. What is meant by "The gates of the rivers are opened"?
9. Compare the refugee situation of Nineveh with that of modern war.
10. Discuss "take the spoil." Is this practice still followed in modern warfare?
11. What is implied in *Nahum 2:13* by the statement "I am against thee"?

CHAPTER XIV

THE EPITAPH OF NINEVEH

WOE TO THE BLOODY CITY . . . Nahum 3:1-3

RV . . . Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and rapine; the prey departeth not. The noise of the whip, and the noise of the rattling of wheels, and prancing horses, and bounding chariots, the horseman mounting, and the flashing sword, and the glittering spear, and a multitude of slain, and a great heap of corpses, and there is no end of the bodies; they stumble upon their bodies;