

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;

LXX . . . O city of blood, wholly false, full of unrighteousness, the prey shall not be handled. The noise of whips, and the noise of the rumbling of wheels, and of the pursuing horse, and of the bounding chariot, and of the mounting rider, and of the glittering sword, and of the gleaming arms, and of a multitude of slain, and of heavy falling; and there was no end to her nations, but they shall be weak in their bodies

## COMMENTS

Nineveh, for years, had neither been taken nor put in fear. Now she lay, in the prophet's vision, as she would soon really lie, in blood and ashes. Nahum's reaction to her ruin is far from mourning. He rather lists her past glory and rejoices in her destruction. Reading this passage, one can almost hear Jonah joining Nahum in his rejoicing. What Jonah longed to see, Nahum saw. (cf. *Jonah 4:1-5*)

### IT IS ALL FULL OF LIES . . . v. 1

Nineveh had aspired to be the capital of the world, by whatever means were at her disposal, whether intrigue in the courts of other nations or by sheer force of arms and the carrying away of conquered peoples. For this Nahum sees her now in ruins.

The God who *made of one blood all the nations of men* never designed any nation to be tyrants and hold others as her slaves. It is He Who will be universal monarch and none other! Yet the chapters of both ancient and modern history are delineated by the records of kings and nations who have tried to rule the world. None have long succeeded.

### THE NOISE . . . THE NOISE . . . v. 2-3

The city lies dead. The silence of death is broken only by the sound of enemy arms moving about the streets. There is no regard for the dead . . . the invaders stumble over the fallen corpses.

The carnage seems endless. No attempt is made to count the bodies. They are simply a multitude.

### CAUSE OF THE CARNAGE . . . Nahum 3:4-7

RV . . . 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. Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will uncover thy skirts upon thy face; and

I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing-stock. 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?

LXX . . . because of the abundance of fornication: she is a fair harlot, and well-favoured, skilled in sorcery, that sells the nations by her fornication and peoples by her sorceries. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord God Almighty, and I will uncover thy skirts in thy presence, and I will shew thy nations thy shame, and the kingdoms thy disgrace. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee according to thine unclean ways, and will make thee a public example. And it shall be that every one that sees thee shall go down from thee, and shall say, Wretched Nineveh! who shall lament for her? whence shall I seek comfort for her?

### COMMENTS

The cry of the modern social revolutionist is "if there is a god, why does he not halt or prevent war?" The paragraph before us deserves serious study in answer to this questioning. The God Who declares Himself against Nineveh has not changed in His righteous wrath upon wicked nations.

#### BECAUSE OF THE MULTITUDE OF WHOREDOMS . . . v. 4

Here is a listing, brief and to the point, of the sins of Nineveh. No doubt the term "whoredoms of the well-favored harlot" could be a literal description of the immorality of the Assyrian capital. Such corruption always precedes the downfall of an empire, just as it now eats the fibre out of the strength of the United States.

However, it is more likely Nahum intends here the more profound harlotry that brought on war. Nineveh had courted neighboring nations with the design to ruin their liberties and property.

Nor must we omit from the "multitude of her whoredoms" her mystery religion. (See chapter on Baal worship.) In her heyday, Assyria was one of the most brutal empires ever to cross the pages of history. Will Durant points out that her religion did nothing to mollify this tendency to violence. Ashur was the name of the national version of the sun god. He was warlike, merciless and was believed to take a divine satisfaction in the sacrifice of captured enemies before his shrine.

The worship of Ashur was largely one of omens and exorcism.

These Nahum calls witchcrafts. The world was pictured as full of a host of demons to be warded off by charms and long incantations.

### I WILL UNCOVER . . . v. 5

The foreign policy of Assyria, as we have seen, was one of ambitious deceit. This stood first in the list of her harlotries. Now her proud pretensions are to be baffled by Jehovah. Her shame is discovered to her neighbor nations. Her vain hope of universal domination is first revealed and then dashed to pieces.

### I WILL . . . SET THEE AS A GAZING STOCK . . . v. 6-7

That great city to which all nations had made court, with which they had coveted alliances, is made a laughing stock.

Abominable filth and vileness is always the aftermath of war. I can still smell the stench of death in the blasted rubble of European cities during World War II. The disease which rises from such putridity causes many to flee . . . and to marvel at the destruction of Nineveh.

No one is left to mourn the passing of Nineveh. Nahum takes delight in it and taunts her with an offer to hire mourners. One cannot but wonder if the Spirit Who inspired Nahum's prophecy approved of the poet's almost sadistic delight in the calamity that befell his enemies. I personally doubt it. More likely God's attitude toward Jonah, when that prophet pouted because Nineveh had been spared, was the same toward Nahum. (*Jonah 4:9-ff*) We do not know.

### NINEVEH IS NO BETTER . . . Nahum 3:8-19

RV . . . Art thou better than No-amon, that was situated among the rivers, that had the waters round about her; whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was of the sea? Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity; her young children also were dashed in pieces at the head of all the streets; and they cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains. Thou also shalt be drunken; thou shalt be hid; thou also shalt seek a stronghold because of the enemy. All thy fortresses shall be like fig-trees with the first ripe figs: if they be shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater. Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women; the gates of thy land are set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire hath devoured thy bars. Draw thee water for the siege; strengthen thy fortresses; go into the clay, and tread the mortar; make strong the brickkiln. There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off; it shall devour

thee like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the canker-worm; make thyself many as the locust. Thou has multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven; the canker-worm ravageth, and fleeth away. Thy princes are as the locusts, and thy marshals as the swarms of grasshoppers, which encamp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known they are. Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; thy nobles are at rest; thy people are scattered upon the mountains, and there is none to gather them. There is no assuaging of thy hurt; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the report of thee clap their hands over thee; for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

LXX . . . Prepare thee a portion, tune the chord, prepare a portion for Ammon: she that dwells among the rivers, water is round about her, whose dominion is the sea, and whose walls are water. And Ethiopia is her strength, and Egypt; and there was no limit of the flight of her enemies; and the Libyans became her helpers. Yet she shall go as a prisoner into captivity, and they shall dash her infants against the ground at the top of all her ways: and they shall cast lots upon all her glorious possessions, and all her nobles shall be bound in chains. And thou shalt be drunken, and shalt be overlooked; and thou shalt seek for thyself strength because of thine enemies. All thy strong-holds are as fig-trees, having watchers: if they be shaken, they shall fall into the mouth of the eater. Behold, thy people within thee are as women: the gates of thy land shall surely be opened to thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars. Draw thee water for a siege, and well secure thy strong-holds: enter into the clay, and be thou trodden in the chaff, make the fortifications stronger than brick. There the fire shall devour thee; the sword shall utterly destroy thee, it shall devour thee as the locust, and thou shalt be pressed down as a palmerworm. Thou hast multiplied thy merchandise beyond the stars of heaven: the palmerworm has attacked it, and has flown away. Thy mixed multitude has suddenly departed as the grasshopper, as the locust perched on a hedge in a frosty day; the sun arises, and it flies off, and knows not its place: woe to them! Thy shepherds have slumbered, the Assyrian king has laid low thy mighty men: thy people departed to the mountains, and there was none to receive them. There is no healing for thy bruise; thy wound has rankled: all that hear the report of thee shall clap their hands against thee; for upon whom has not thy wickedness passed continually?

## COMMENTS

## ART THOU BETTER? . . . v. 8-10

No-Amon, Karnak, Thebes . . . all names of one of the proudest cities ever built by man. Capital of the middle kingdom of Egypt, she stood majestically on the Nile and guarded the largest temple complex ever built . . . anywhere. Every Pharaoh, from the 12th to the 19th dynasty except the heretic, Ikhnaton, added to her glory. Her civilization, in some instances, advanced beyond that of our own day. Even today the visitor stands in silent awe before her columns and obelisks. One cannot but marvel at the sacred lake at Karnak, where the sprinkling of exorcism and the immersion of Christian baptism first became confused in the fourth century A.D.

But No-Amon, Karnak fell! And it was the Assyrians themselves who in 674 B.C. swept down from the north and subjected the proud Egyptians to tribute . . . and the taunt of the prophet to Nineveh who herself is now to be destroyed is "Art thou better than No-Amon?"

Art thou better? It is a question that sends chills along the spine of any thinking American who is fortunate enough to stand amidst the ruins of fallen civilizations. Are we better than they, that our international harlotries, our internal immoralities, our worship of false gods should not one day bring down upon our heads the wrath of Jehovah? Is it a strange idea, reserved for crackpots and prophets of doom, that God may one day use a heathen nation to fill the streets of Washington, D.C. and New York and Chicago and our other proud cities with corpses even as He used the Medes and Babylonians to lay Nineveh in the dust for her sins?

## THOU ALSO . . . v. 11

The words fall like the knell of doom on the proud capital of Assyria. The leaders literally were drunken when the Medes and Babylonians came, but they had been in a stupor of a different kind long before. They were "made drunken with the wine of Nineveh's fornication." (Cp. *Revelation* 17:1-2 and *Jeremiah* 25:17-27)

## ALL THY FORTRESSES . . . v. 12-15

All those things in which Nineveh trusted would fail her. Did they trust in bravery and daring? Their hearts would sink and fail them, so that they should abscond for shame, being in disgrace. For fear they will not be able to face invaders because of whose strength they shall sneak to their neighbors to beg assistance.

Did they depend on the garrisons and strongholds? These shall prove to be paper walls. Like the first-ripe figs, if you give the tree a little shake, they will fall in your mouth.

Having seen the vanity of the efforts to defend the doomed city, Nahum nevertheless taunts them to make ready to stand off the invader. They are admonished to lay in quantities of water against a siege. New bricks are to be made to strengthen the fortifications.

#### THEN SHALL A FIRE DEVOUR THEE . . . v. 15

By fire set to buildings and death sown by hand weapons are cities conquered. It is still the same . . . from Nineveh to My Lai.

Though the defenders of Nineveh are as numerous as canker-worms and as locusts . . . yet they shall be over-run.

There is a scathing irony in Nahum's choice of vermin to illustrate the multitudes of Nineveh's defenders. Both the cankerworm and the locust leave devastation wherever they go. So had Assyria spread destruction throughout the world. Now—to use a cliché "the worm has turned."

The Assyrian merchants who once fleeced the populace of surrounding nations will be seen no more, they are like the canker-worm who "ravageth and fleeth away."

The princes also, and the marshalls, those who enforced the Assyrian sway over conquered peoples will be seen no more. Like swarms of grasshoppers which destroy while they are present, but fly away to be seen no more, the Assyrian authorities will, like the merchants, not be seen anymore in lands once ruled as defeated people.

#### THY WOUND IS GREIVIOUS . . . v. 18-19

The destruction of Nineveh will prove the mortal wound of the entire empire. It is all in Nahum's future, but he has seen it in a present vision. History has verified his prophetic pronouncement.

In 612 B.C. the alliance between the Medes and Babylonians did indeed march into the city and that which Nahum foresaw became reality. The alliance was short lived and the victors shortly began to war among themselves. But the fatal blow had been struck.

Never again would Nineveh, or Assyria, play an important role in world affairs. Today the location of the city itself is scarcely discernable, rising as two tells on the valley of the Tigris.

God's prophetic word once more is vindicated by history.

Chapter XIV—Questions

The Epitaph of Nineveh

1. Why does Nahum say Nineveh is "full of lies?"
2. In Nahum's vision of fallen Nineveh, the silence is broken only by\_\_\_\_\_.
3. Discuss *Nahum* 3:4-7 in light of the modern question, "If there is a God, why does He not halt or prevent war?"
4. What are the "sins of Nineveh" as listed in this paragraph?
5. What is indicated by Nahum's term "witchcrafts?"
6. How does God intend to make Nineveh a "gazing stock?"
7. Who are No-Amon, Karnak, Thebes?
8. Where did the sprinkling of exorcism first become confused with the immersion of Christian baptism? When did this occur?
9. Compare the fate of No-Amon with that of Nineveh.
10. Who defeated No-Amon in 674 B.C.?
11. Discuss Nahum's question "art thou better?" as applied to modern America.
12. In what physical condition were the leaders of Nineveh when the Medes and Babylonians fell upon them?
13. What were "all thy fortresses" in *Nahum* 3:12-15?
14. What is the irony of Nahum's choice of vermin to illustrate the multitudes of Nineveh's defenders?
15. The destruction of the city of Nineveh was the mortal wound of\_\_\_\_\_.
16. How is God's word in Nahum vindicated by history in the destruction of the Assyrian Empire?