

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: NAHUM

NAHUM

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

NAHUM CHAPTER 1

Jonah and Nahum

Nahum also prophesied against Nineveh. When we read his words, it would appear that there was no chance for Nineveh. And yet presumably there was always a chance for them, just as there was at Jonah's time some years previously. But it seems to me that the essential message of Nahum was that of Jonah. They could have repented, even then. Not surprisingly, we find many allusions by Nahum back to Jonah:

Nahum

Jonah [re. Nineveh]

God is slow to anger (1:3)

4:2 [same Hebrew words]- and therefore He saved Nineveh.

"Who can abide in the fierceness of His anger?" (1:6)

God turns away from "the fierceness of His anger" [s.w.] against Nineveh (3:9)- Nineveh had survived God's fierce anger by repenting, and

so they could even in Nahum's time. The Hebrew word translated "abide" in Nah. 1:6 is that used in Jonah to describe how the King of Assyria "arose" (3:6) in repentance. The answer to the question: "Who can abide / arise in the [presence of] the fierceness of His anger?" is: 'The King of Assyria if he repents'.

The wickedness of Nineveh
"came up" before God's face (2:1)

The same words are used about Nineveh (1:2).

God was "against" Nineveh
(2:13)

Same word in 1:2

Judged for "wickedness" (3:19)

Same word in 1:2; 3:8

It becomes apparent that the Ninevites of Nahum's day are being directed back to the repentance of their city at the time of Jonah; but clearly they are also being invited to share in Jonah's personal repentance.

Nahum

Jonah [about himself]

God has His way in the storm
(1:3)

Jonah's experience in the storm

God rebukes the sea (1:4)

As God stilled the storm which Jonah was in

Who can stand before God? (1:5)

Jonah had to be 'stood up' [s.w.] from his hiding in the ship when fleeing from God's presence (1:15)

The Lord is a stronghold "in the day of trouble" (1:7) to those who trust Him.

Jonah cried to God in his "affliction" [s.w. "trouble"] (2:2)

An "overrunning flood" will overtake Nineveh (1:8)

"The floods...passed over [s.w. "overrunning"] Jonah (2:2); but Jonah repented and was saved. Note how the connections between Nah. 1:7,8 and Jonah 2:2 are in close proximity- surely an allusion is intended here.

Affliction (1:9)

Affliction [s.w.] (2:2)

From this it becomes apparent that Jonah is seen by God as in essentially the same position as the Ninevites. This was why his appeal to them was so strong. For he had been in just their position, in essence, yet had repented. The fact Nahum makes all these allusions to Jonah's personal repentance indicates that they well knew the story of Jonah; and his repentance had inspired that of the audience he preached to. In these we see a very real pattern for ourselves; it is our identity with our audience, as repentant sinners ourselves, which will elicit their response.

Nahum's message was not only a warning of judgment to come upon Nineveh. It was an appeal to Israel, that unless they repented, they would likewise perish. The appeal to Judah to "perform your vows" (Nah. 1:15) is couched in the very same words as Jonah used in Jonah 2:9: "I will pay [s.w. perform] that which I have vowed". Judah were being asked to be like Jonah, and not despise Nineveh, but rather appeal to her to repent.

Nahum Chapter 1

Nahum 1:1 *A divine word about Nineveh*- Literally, "doom". The idea may be that the previous word against Nineveh through Jonah had not come about because of their repentance, but now, 150 years later, the word was to come true. For they had not maintained that peak of repentance.

The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite- Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains* Vol. 1 p. 233, was certain that he had discovered the village of Elkosh near Nineveh. There is no definite evidence that it is the name of anywhere in Palestine. Jonah was buried in Mosul / Nineveh, implying he returned there after his repentance at the end of the book of Jonah and perhaps spent the rest of his days ministering to the converts there, some of whom we know from the Lord's words shall rise in judgment to eternal life. It may be that Nahum continued Jonah's work, despairing as the believing community there turned away over time. Or perhaps he was one of the captives taken there during one of the waves of Assyrian invasions. Nahum says little about Judah and when he rarely addresses them, he speaks as if from a distance. Aramaisms have been detected in his Hebrew at Nah. 2:4,8,13. And the term *taphsar* in Nah. 3:17 is an Assyrian word. Nahum writes as if he was familiar with Nineveh, as would his audience be. If indeed he was prophesying in Palestine, we would wonder at exactly why all the detail was given to his first hearers, about a distant city they didn't know. I note on Nah. 1:13 and often that Nahum may well have been prophesying at the time that the Assyrians attacked Judah and Jerusalem, having been taken into captivity himself by the Assyrians from the ten tribe kingdom some years before.

In this case, we can marvel at his bravery in uttering this prophecy. It would have been unpopular with the Ninevites and seen as blasphemous of their gods and culture. And the Jews with Nahum would not have been inclined to believe him; because they lived there, and the destruction of Nineveh and Assyria by invaders would mean the loss of all they had, and an end of their world. Our message likewise is going to be unpopular with secular society, as well as with worldly Christian believers. For our world is likewise about to collapse around us.

Nahum 1:2 *Yahweh is a jealous God and avenges*- God had promised vengeance on the Assyrians in Joel 2:18. Although they were the rod in His hand and used by Him (Is. 10), they had overstepped their commission, both in what they did to the ten tribes and to the land of Judah during Sennacherib's invasion.

Yahweh avenges and is full of wrath. Yahweh takes vengeance on His adversaries, and He maintains wrath against His enemies- This language is used of God's people as well as the Gentile invaders. He "maintains" or keeps His wrath if people are impenitent (Jer. 3:5,12; Mic. 7:18). There may therefore be a hint that if Nineveh repented as they had at Jonah's

time, even this detailed prophecy of judgment need not come about. There is a gap between His statement of judgment and His execution of it; in that gap, His wrath is kept, but it need not be executed if we repent. And that is the intensity of the moment both we and this world stand within.

Nahum 1:3 *Yahweh is slow to anger, and great in power, and will by no means leave the guilty unpunished*- This is an appeal to the basic characteristics of God which are part of His essential Name (Ex. 34:6,7). The slowness to anger refers to the gap commented upon on :2.

Yahweh has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet- This is the language of theophany. As the cherubim would come upon His people in judgment, as Ezekiel's visions visualize, so they would upon Assyria. We see here what is to be a theme in Nahum; that the same Divine judgments upon His people were to come upon those who judged them. We see this in the structure of Revelation; the seals of judgment upon Israel are related to the bowls of wrath upon those who judge them.

Nahum 1:4 *He rebukes the sea*- The language of the Red Sea. The implication may be that the judgment of Assyria, the drying up of her waters, which represent Gentiles, was to issue forth in the return of the Israelites exiled in Assyria- people like Nahum. This was always the Divine intention- that both the ten tribes and Judah would return from captivity and re-establish His Kingdom upon earth in the form of Israel. But this didn't happen; the exiles for the most part preferred to remain amongst the Gentiles, and didn't repent. The same term is used in Mt. 8:26 for the Lord's rebuking of the sea. This doesn't make Him "God" in a Trinitarian sense, it means that He manifested God, just as Moses likewise rebuked the Red Sea, on God's behalf, without being God Himself in person.

And makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers. Bashan languishes, and Carmel; and the flower of Lebanon languishes- "The sea" would refer to Assyria, and "the rivers" to the peoples and mercenary armies which were part of the Assyrian empire. The idea may be that this was to happen because they had made Bashan and Carmel to languish; or the picture could be of Bashan and Carmel in time of drought, and this is applied to Assyria. Such a reference to a situation in the land of Israel could imply that although Nahum's message was given in Assyria (see on :1), it was also published in Israel and Judah. They were to know that the Assyrian empire was going to dry up, just like Carmel in time of drought.

Nahum 1:5 *The mountains quake before Him, and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at His presence, yes, the world, and all who dwell in it*- This is the language of the exodus from Egypt. God works according to the same hallmark, stamped upon all His actions and judgments over history. The nations ["mountains"] of the *eretz* promised to Abraham had trembled before the cruel Assyrians; but now they were to quake before God. The Assyrians were a fake Kingdom of God, offering *their* kingdom as if it were the actual Kingdom of God (Is. 36:16 cp. Mic. 4:4). And so God was to establish *His* Kingdom at the time of Assyria's judgment. This was the intended path for the development of God's purpose at that time; then, the repentant exiles of Israel and Judah would return to re-establish God's Kingdom. But they didn't repent, and so this scenario didn't come true. But it will ultimately, in the judgment of the latter day Assyria, repentance of the Jewish remnant, and the return of the Lord Jesus to establish God's Kingdom on earth. Then God's "presence" will literally be on earth. The very same language is used of the quaking of the mountains after Gog is destroyed at the Lord's second coming (Ez. 38:20).

Nahum 1:6 *Who can stand before His indignation?*- The words of Ps. 130:3 about the inability of sinners to stand before God's wrath. God counted the Assyrians as sinners and

responsible to His judgment. And yet the average Assyrian didn't have a detailed knowledge of Him. The knowledge which makes responsible to judgment is therefore very basic. There are those who will respond to that same basic knowledge in humility and repentance, as Nineveh did at the time of Jonah. And this will be their eternal salvation, as the Lord Himself said of the men of Nineveh. The amount of theological knowledge required for responsibility to God is therefore apparently very low.

Who can endure the fierceness of His anger?- Although Nahum was prophesying to the Assyria of his day, not every detail came true in his time. Yet his words will have their ultimate fulfilment in the destruction of the latter day Assyria, and so these words in this verse are used in other latter day prophecies (Joel 2:11; Mal. 3:2; Rev. 6:17).

His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken apart by Him- This is the language of Jer. 7:20 about God's wrath with Judah. What Assyria had done to God's people was to be done to them; see on :3.

Nahum 1:7 *Yahweh is good*- All this talk of judgment to come must be understood beneath the simple principle that Yahweh is good; He is not unjust, and He goes on now to say that all His true people will be saved out of judgment.

A stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who take refuge in Him- This was perhaps comfort to the Jews in Nineveh, or the faithful remnant of those who had responded to Jonah previously, who were hearing Nahum's message; see on :1. God knew them and is promising to preserve them from the judgment to come upon Nineveh. Assyria would seek for a stronghold in the time of their condemnation and not find one (s.w. Nah. 3:11); because Yahweh alone was the stronghold in the day of judgment.

Nahum 1:8 *But with an overflowing flood*- Floods or waters refer to invading armies, but the allusion is also to how Assyria would be destroyed as the world of Noah's day was. And that implied the survival of a remnant. In these judgments there is always the hint of hope for those who wanted to go God's way. "There is perhaps a special allusion to the mode of Nineveh's capture by the Medo-Babylonian army-namely, through a flood in the river, which broke down the wall twenty furlongs". But the language of "flood" is surely figurative, for Zeph. 2:13 says that Nineveh would be made as *dry* as the wilderness

He will make a full end of His adversaries, and will pursue His enemies into darkness- The Hebrew implies "make an utter end of the place thereof" (AV). But Nineveh still 'stands' in the form of the city of Mosul. This may be an example of where Nahum's prophecy didn't have exact fulfilment; but it will have in the total destruction of the latter day Assyrian.

But to die with no trace is a figure for judgment and need not be taken literally (Ps. 37:36; Dan. 2:35). It resembles the termination of many Assyrian inscriptions which record the defeat of a hostile chieftain: "And no one has seen any trace of him since". Again, what Assyria had done to God's people was to be done to them; see on :3.

Nahum 1:9 *What do you plot against Yahweh? He will make a full end*- To plot against Yahweh is evidently futile. Jer. 49:30 cp. 50:45 develop the point, that Babylon had plotted against God's people to destroy them, but God plotted / planned Babylon's total destruction. Attitudes to God's people are attitudes to Him; how we treat them is how God will treat us. This is a theme enshrined in the New Testament, and should majorly control our whole attitude to all within covenant relationship with them. They are in our lives and we in theirs, in order to have an arena in which to work out the principles of love, tolerance and correct judgment.

Affliction won't rise up the second time- Assyria in its then present form would not again afflict Judah. But Judah did suffer "affliction" many times again. Here we have another example of where the planned destruction of Nineveh could have been the ending of all Judah's suffering, leading to the return of the repentant exiles and the establishment of God's Kingdom in Israel. But this didn't happen as the exiles didn't repent. And Judah suffered affliction many more times. The fulfilment of these words has therefore been reapplied and rescheduled to the last days, when indeed Judah will never be afflicted again. "Affliction" is the word used of Jacob's final and never to be repeated time of trouble in the last days (Gen. 35:3; Dan. 12:1). But the word is also used of the affliction caused by the Assyrian invasion of Judah in Hezekiah's time (Is. 37:3 and often in Isaiah). This could have been the final affliction which was never to be repeated. But Hezekiah let the baton drop, the repentance of the people was but symbolic, and they lost the kingdom vision. And so these words can only have their total fulfilment in the last days.

Nahum 1:10 *For while they are entangled in thorns-* The idea may be that they would be burnt like thorns, the curse of sin (2 Sam. 23:6,7).

And intoxicated with their drink, they will be consumed utterly like dry stubble- "Their drunken revelries are perhaps alluded to, during which the foe (according to Diodorus Siculus, 2) broke into their city, and Sardanapalus burned his palace; though the main and ultimate destruction of Nineveh referred to by Nahum was long subsequent to that under Sardanapalus". The LXX offers: "Because to its foundation it shall be dried up", alluding to the way Nineveh was captured as explained on :8.

Nahum 1:11 *There is one gone forth out of you, who devises evil against Yahweh, who counsels wickedness-* This seems very relevant to the wicked devices of Sennacherib and Rabshakeh against Yahweh, counselling the Jerusalem Jews to accept the Assyrian offer of a kingdom like that promised by Yahweh, each man sitting under his own fig tree. Their campaign was specifically "against Yahweh" in that they compared Him with the other deities whose supposed power they had overcome; hence "What do you imagine against the Lord?" (2 Kings 19:22,23). The latter day fulfilment will be in Gog, the leader of latter day Assyria, whose invasion of the land is described in the same language as that of Assyria. He too will "devise evil" against God's people; the very same Hebrew phrase is translated "think an evil thought" in Ez. 38:10. And yet the same phrase is several times used of how God devises evil against Israel's enemies as well as against His people (Jer. 18:11; 26:3). The devising of evil by Assyria was in a sense God's devising of evil; He works out His purpose through the thoughts and intents of human hearts. His activity on human hearts is thus intertwined with the thoughts which human beings themselves have; confirming them but never forcing them to act as robots programmed by Him against their will.

Nahum 1:12 *Thus says Yahweh: Though they be in full strength-* Heb. 'at peace'. These words can apply to both Assyria and Judah in their self confidence. Assyria invaded Judah at the pinnacle of their power and confidence.

And likewise many- We recall Hezekiah's words to the people as the Assyrians approached in 2 Chron. 32:7: "Be not afraid... for all the multitude that is with him".

Even so they will be cut down- Heb. 'shaved', as Assyria did to God's people (Is. 7:20), so it was to be done to them; see on :3.

And he shall pass away- "They shall be cut down, when He (Yahweh) shall pass through," destroying by one Angelic stroke the Assyrian host, just as the Angel had passed through Egypt and done likewise.

Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more- Elsewhere spoken to Judah if they were repentant (Is. 40:1,2; 52:1,2). It's difficult to tell whether Assyria or Judah are being addressed; the point being that both were threatened with the same Divine judgment, and both could have repented and averted it. Nineveh had earlier done this at Jonah's time, and the implication of all these details of judgment is that they could do so again.

Nahum 1:13 *Now will I break his yoke from off you, and will burst your bonds apart-* Surely a reference to the Assyrian's yoke upon Judah (2 Kings 18:14; Is. 10:27). The implication of "Now..." is that Nahum may have been contemporary with the Sennacherib invasion of Judah at Hezekiah's time, having himself been one of those taken captive to Assyria from the ten tribes some years before. Some kind of Messianic kingdom could have been established then, but Hezekiah didn't follow through on his potential, and the exiles didn't repent. The intended scenario was that Nineveh would be destroyed and the exiles return in repentance; but that didn't quite happen as it potentially could have done, although the prophetic word will ultimately come true in the last days.

Nahum 1:14 *Yahweh has commanded concerning you: No more descendants will bear your name-* The idea is that his dynasty would become extinct, which is what happened when Sennacherib was slain by his sons at Hezekiah's time, and they fled away from Assyria (Is. 37:38).

Out of the house of your gods will I cut off the engraved image and the molten image- The Medes are recorded as delighting in destroying the idols of Nineveh. As the Assyrians had "cut off" the idols of other nations, so theirs were treated (2 Kings 19:18). An engraving at Khorsabad shows a man cutting an idol to pieces. The Assyrian palaces of the kings were thought to be sacred, and thus the king's house was also the house of their gods; Layard mentions this repeatedly. "Cut off" is then used about the Assyrians' fate (:15). Those who worship idols are like unto them. The idols were to be cut off when the Assyrians were cut off; they were one and the same. And that is true for all forms of idolatry and idolators today. See on Nah. 2:6.

I will make your grave- The Hebrew implies "'I will make it ["the house of your gods", Nisroch] your grave". And this truly happened: "As he (Sennacherib) was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god... Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword" (Is. 37:38).

For you are vile- The word is also translated "light"; as if weighed in the balances and found wanting (Dan. 5:27).

Nahum 1:15 *Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace!-* The picture is of a herald speeding towards Judah with good news. It could be that Nahum had himself in mind, in that I suggested on :1 that his prophecy of Assyria's destruction was given to him in Assyria, but the scroll or message was sent back to Judah. The good news was the destruction of the seemingly invincible Assyrians, and by implication, the re-establishment of God's Kingdom in Israel under a Messianic figure. These words are quoted in Rom. 10:15 about the Lord Jesus. A Messiah figure, the prophetic word made flesh, could then have come to Judah. But the exiles didn't repent and Hezekiah turned away from the things of God's Kingdom. And so the prophecy was reapplied and rescheduled to the Lord Jesus as Messiah.

Keep your feasts, Judah! Perform your vows, for the wicked one will no more pass through you. He is utterly cut off- This could be an appeal to Judah to return to relationship with God because of the great spiritual potentials which would be enabled by the destruction of the Assyrians. Or the reference may simply be to the way that now Judah [which had been

mostly occupied by the Assyrian army] could now keep the feasts again because they had free access to the Jerusalem temple. "Pass through you" is the very term used of the Assyrian invasion in Hezekiah's time (Is. 8:8; 26:20; 28:15,18,19). "Cut off" is the terms used for the destruction of the Assyrians at that time (Is. 11:13); But although the Assyrian army was destroyed in Hezekiah's time, it was not true that the wicked would never again pass through Judah. This prophecy therefore has its final fulfilment in the last days. Nineveh did not fall when the Assyrian army was destroyed at Jerusalem; and yet that is the implication of Nahum. Hezekiah instead wanted to consort with the Babylonians and there was no repentance amongst the exiles; and so the prophecy must be fulfilled in the last days.

These words are similar to Is. 52:7, referring to a similar deliverance from Babylon. The exiles in Assyria didn't want to return, and yet the appeal is made some years later to those in Babylon. And again, the same potential was possible- the re-establishment of God's Kingdom on earth in the form of Israel. But all these potentials came to nothing, and so the words are quoted in Rom. 10:15 with a subtle change of pronoun: "How beautiful are the feet of *him* that preaches the Gospel" becomes "How beautiful are the feet of *them* that preach". We are the Lord Jesus to this world, because we are brethren in Him. The theme of Romans is the Gospel, and in this context Paul makes the point that because both Jew and Gentile are saved by the Gospel, *therefore* we should preach to both Jew and Gentile (Rom. 10:9-18). In this context, Paul quotes from Is. 52:7 and Nah. 1:15, both concerning preaching to Israel: "How shall they hear without a preacher? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of *them* (cp. 'he' in the originals- our preaching is a manifestation of the Lord) that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings". The Nahum passage is in the context of preaching to Israel the good news of their ultimate freedom from the Assyrian invasion which was then imminent. We are in a strikingly parallel situation in these last days. Rom. 10:16 then goes on to quote Is. 53:1, which again refers to the preaching of the Gospel to Israel, and applies it to our preaching.

NAHUM CHAPTER 2

Nahum Chapter 2

Nahum 2:1 *He who dashes in pieces has come up against you. Keep the fortress! Watch the way! Strengthen your muscles! Fortify your power mightily!*- The prophets continually decry all human strength, and so this is said not so much in sarcasm, but because God wants Nineveh to trust in its strength so that it would in due course repent upon seeing how worthless is any human strength. See on Nah. 3:14.

But we could read this as following on from Nah. 1:15, where a messenger comes to Judah with Nahum's message that Assyria is to be destroyed. If indeed this was at the time of the Assyrian encirclement of Jerusalem, then Nah. 2:1 may be addressed to Zion, encouraging them to keep and not surrender the fortress of Zion, and to strengthen themselves in God.

Nahum 2:2 *For Yahweh restores the pride of Jacob, as the pride of Israel; for the destroyers have destroyed them, and ruined their vine branches*- Clearly the destruction of Nineveh was intended to coincide with the restoration of Jacob, and the shooting forth of his vine branches with fruit upon them. This didn't happen as it could have done in Nahum's time. Jacob didn't bring forth fruit, and his glory was not restored. The restoration of God's Kingdom in Israel was deferred and rescheduled to the last days, when the latter day Assyrian will be destroyed and the repentant Jewish remnant bring forth spiritual fruit. The pride or excellency of Jacob refers to the land promised to Jacob and the patriarchs (s.w. Ps. 47:4; Am. 6:8).

Nahum 2:3 *The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are dressed in scarlet, the chariots flash with steel in the day of his preparation, and the pine spears are brandished-* The Assyrians were noted for their red shields and scarlet military uniforms. Now, that red colour was to be due to their own blood.

The destruction of Nineveh by chariots with flaming fire (2:3-5) suggests that the Medes were but representatives of the Cherubim chariots with Angels made as a flame of fire (Ps. 104:4); thus the "worthies" of 2:5 are the Angels, and the work controlled overall by the "Lord of Hosts" (Nah. 3:5)- of Angels. There are several other examples of human armies being described in Angelic language. Our worst enemies are under Angelic control. The Angel who destroyed the Assyrians outside the walls of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time was to then go to Nineveh and destroy their capital city. But as noted above, this didn't fully happen as intended because the people of God didn't bring forth spiritual fruit (see on :2).

Nahum 2:4 *The chariots rage in the streets, they rush back and forth in the broad highways. Their appearance is like torches, they run like lightning-* As noted on :3, this is the language of the Angel cherubim; we note the similarity of language with the cherubim visions of Ezekiel ("appearance", "like torches", 'running', "like lightning"). The Angel who destroyed the Assyrians outside the walls of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time was to then go to Nineveh and destroy their capital city. But as noted above, this didn't fully happen as intended because the people of God didn't bring forth spiritual fruit (see on :2).

Nahum 2:5 *He summons his picked troops. They stumble on their way. They dash to protect its wall, and the protective shield is put in place-* Missile shields and other such defensive technology is what the nations trust in today as well. Again the message is that the highest human might and technology, the "picked troops", are unable to defend against God's judgment. These troops did not stumble on their way when they were sent against Judah by God (s.w. Is. 5:27), but now they would stumble. The lesson is that God elevates and brings down, and the greatest of men in secular terms are only given their power and glory for a time, to achieve God's wider plan. See on Nah. 3:13.

Nahum 2:6 *The gates of the rivers are opened-* Various commentators give historical accounts of the fall of Nineveh to the Medes which involve the river being used to overthrow the city, as happened with Babylon. The simple point is that their defences were seemingly unbreachable, but they were breached very easily. And this is a lesson for all who trust in human defences and insurances.

And the palace is dissolved- Some claim that the king of Nineveh burnt the palace over himself. Seeing the palace was also the house of his gods (see on Nah. 1:14), this was a significant recognition that his entire religious and spiritual life had been a failure. He died with his gods, becoming like that which he worshipped.

Nahum 2:7 *It is decreed: she is uncovered, she is carried away; and her handmaids moan as with the voice of doves, beating on their breasts-* The reference may be to the queen of Nineveh (AV "Huzzab"), after her husband had committed suicide in the invasion (see on :6). They were the lion and lioness in the den of :11. But this woman clearly stands as symbolic of the city, which is presented as a prostitute in Nah. 3:4.

The woman who once lived in solitary confinement with her maids was now stripped naked and led away with her maids bemoaning her.

Nahum 2:8 *Like water from a burst dam the people rush away from Nineveh. Stop! Stop! they cry, but no one looks back-* This recalls Mosul, modern Nineveh, under siege in 2017 and the jihadists trying to stop the inhabitants fleeing. The flight of "waters" from Nineveh may suggest these were people from the various nations who had been exiled there; for waters often represent Gentile peoples in the Bible. This verse may be the equivalent of the call for God's people to flee out of Babylon, and like Lot fleeing Sodom, not to look back. Again, the Divine intention was that His exiled people repent and return to the land, now that Assyria was suddenly destroyed. But this didn't quite happen; because they didn't repent, just as it didn't quite happen as potentially possible when Babylon fell. The final fulfilment must be in the last days. See on Nah. 3:7.

Nahum 2:9 *Take the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold, for there is no end of the booty-* This again, as suggested on :8, may be a call not simply to the Medes to pillage Nineveh, but to God's people to treat her as Egypt. They were to take her gold and jewels as Israel had done from Egypt on Passover night, and make their way back to the promised land. Nahum 1 is full of language allusive to the Red Sea and the work of God at the fall of Egypt. As Egypt's chariots were destroyed there, so were Nineveh's to be (:13). They were to grasp the parallels and leave, taking with them the spoil of Egypt.

The glory of all goodly jewels- AV "the glory [of] the pleasant furniture", perhaps a reference to artifacts of Yahweh worship carried away from Judah.

Nahum 2:10 *She is empty, void, and waste. The heart melts, the knees knock together, their bodies and faces have grown pale-* The allusion is to how Assyria had emptied and spoiled (:9) the land of Judah (s.w. Is. 24:3). Faces turned pale, melting hearts and knocking knees is the very language used of what Assyria did to Judah. What Assyria had done to Judah was now being done to her. We see this in the structure of Revelation; the seals of judgment upon Israel are related to the bowls of wrath upon those who judge them.

Nahum 2:11 *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 cubs, and no one made them afraid?-* Lions were the iconic symbol of Assyria, and Nineveh was their den. The reference to lion and lioness may refer to the king and queen of Nineveh, mentioned in :7. "Where is..." Nineveh would suggest that it was to no longer exist. But it did, and still does in the form of Mosul. This may be an example of where Nahum's prophecy didn't have exact fulfilment; but it will have in the total destruction of the latter day Assyrian. See on Nah. 1:8.

Nahum 2:12 *The lion tore in pieces enough for his cubs, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his caves with the kill, and his dens with prey-* The exiles such as Nahum had been taken to Nineveh; "dens" is how their exile is described (Is. 42:22 s.w.). The "prey" was the spoil taken from places like Judah (Is. 17:14; 24:3). But it was a restored Judah who were to be the lion who took prey (Gen. 49:9 s.w.). Just as Assyria claimed that their kingdom was as the Kingdom of God (Is. 36:16 cp. Mic.

4:4), so they acted as the lion of Judah. They were an anti-Kingdom of God and their king as an anti-Christ, a pseudo Messiah.

Nahum 2:13 *Behold, I am against you, says Yahweh of Armies, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword will devour your young lions; and I will cut off your prey from the earth-* The destruction of her chariots is another connection with the destruction of the Egyptians; see on :9. Burning chariots was what a faithful Israel were to do to their enemies (Josh. 11:6); again the implication was that Nineveh's destruction was to coincide with the repentance of Israel.

And the voice of your envoys will no longer be heard- This is surely a specific reference to the loud voice of Rabshakeh, the envoy of Sennacherib, outside the walls of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time. The word for "envoys", *malak*, is perhaps used about him in Is. 30:4, and certainly in Is. 37:9,14. But Is. 37:36 then says that Yahweh's *malak*, His Angel / envoy, went out and slew the Assyrian army. Again we see the potential for the fulfilment of the prophecy at Hezekiah's time; but there was only a partial fulfilment because Judah did not repent as required, the repentant exiles didn't return, and so the major fulfilment has been delayed until the last days.

NAHUM CHAPTER 3

Nahum Chapter 3

Nahum 3:1 *Woe to the city of blood! It is all full of lies and robbery- no end to the prey!*- This language is repeatedly used about Jerusalem (Jer. 26:15; Ez. 7:23; 9:9; 22:2,3; 24:6,9). Nineveh's destruction for shedding blood, lying and stealing was to serve as a warning to Jerusalem. They were no better than their Gentile enemies. Situations we encounter in our lives are in order to help us see what will happen to us unless we too repent and change. See on :4.

Nahum 3:2 *The noise of the whip, the noise of the rattling of wheels, prancing horses, and bounding chariots-* The reality of the Medes destroying Nineveh is portrayed here in great and vivid detail. The very noise of the horse whips is mentioned, and the rattling of the chariot wheels on cobblestones. The focus upon these minor details, just as in movies today, was to highlight the reality. But all this could have been avoided had Nineveh repented, as they did in Jonah's time.

Nahum 3:3 *The horseman mounting, and the flashing sword, the glittering spear, and a multitude of slain, and a great heap of corpses, and there is no end of the bodies. They stumble on their bodies-* Often, Angels are described in terms of the men, empires or armies they control- the frequent descriptions of human armies in language which refers to Angels too provides proof of this (e. g. Is. 66:15; Ez. 26:7,10; Joel 2:5; Nahum 2:3,4,13). Nahum 3:3 speaks of how the Assyrians will come with the noise of wheels, as prancing horses, jumping chariots, and "the flashing sword". This is all cherubim-Angel language (Gen. 3:24). The Angels behind those nations and armies were manifested through them, and this there is the use of such similar language. In the same way, the description of the beasts are relevant to the nations they represent, and also to the Angels which control them. Rev. 9:11 provides another example. I have suggested that Nahum wrote at the time of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in the reign of Hezekiah. That invasion was destroyed by just one Angel, and the idea is that the entire Angel cherubim would move on from there to destroy Nineveh itself.

This didn't completely happen as planned, because the repentance of God's people was required. But there was indeed a partial fulfilment, looking forward to that of the last days.

Nahum 3:4 *Because of the multitude of the prostitution of the alluring prostitute, the mistress of witchcraft, who sells nations through her prostitution, and families through her witchcraft-* As explained on Nah. 2:7, Nineveh was personified as her queen, Huzzab. Assyria appeared externally attractive to nations like Judah, offering them a fake kingdom of God if they gave in to her (Is. 36:16 cp. Mic. 4:4). But again, as noted on :1, Jerusalem was also likened to a prostitute, as was Babylon. Jerusalem was to learn that she was no better than Nineveh, and to be warned by Nineveh's destruction; realizing that at the time of Sennacherib's invasion, she had been saved by grace alone at the very last moment.

Nahum 3:5 *Behold, I am against you, says Yahweh of Armies, and I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness, and the kingdoms your shame-* This is again similar language to the judgment threatened upon God's people (Jer. 13:26). See on :4. The nakedness of the queen of Nineveh as she was led into captivity (see on Mic. 2:7) was to represent the exposing of Nineveh and the Assyrians. The plural "kingdoms" may refer to the combined forces of the Medes and Babylonians. Once inside Nineveh, the shame of her behaviour was revealed to all.

Nahum 3:6 *I will throw abominable filth on you, and make you vile, and will set you a spectacle-* The punishment for a prostitute. Assyria would be revealed for who she really was. "Abominable filth" is a term always (27 times) elsewhere used of idols (Dt. 29:17 etc.). She was to be treated as an idol, because those who make idols are like unto them (Ps. 115:8). All the idols of our world shall come to an eternal end, often a tragic end; and so shall we, if we worship them and trust in them.

Nahum 3:7 *It will happen that all those who look at you will flee from you, and say, 'Nineveh is laid waste! Who will mourn for her?' Where will I seek comforters for you?-* To die with no mourners was the worst death for a Middle Eastern person of those times. As noted on Nah. 2:8, we may be intended to understand here a call to flee from Nineveh; for ultimately, everyone would flee from her. Again, the Divine intention was that His exiled people repent and return to the land, now that Assyria was suddenly destroyed. But this didn't quite happen; because they didn't repent, just as it didn't quite happen as potentially possible when Babylon fell. The final fulfilment must be in the last days.

Nahum 3:8 *Are you better than No-Amon, who was situated among the rivers, who had the waters around her; whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was of the sea?-* The allusion is to the previous dramatic victory of Sargon over No-Amon in Egypt; "the sea" would refer to the Nile. This city, like Nineveh, trusted in rivers and moats for her defence. But the Assyrians overcame this, and Nineveh's similar defences would likewise be destroyed. What Nineveh / Assyria had done to others would be done to them. They too were not invincible.

Nahum 3:9 *Cush and Egypt were her infinite strength. Put and Libya were her helpers-* "Infinite strength" is of course only from a human perspective. We have here another example of how God understands how humans see things, and uses their

language in appealing to them; the usage of "demon" language in the New Testament is another example. Assyria had conquered No-Amon, even though that city was confident that Egypt and other nations were "her infinite strength". Judah too was trusting in Egypt at the time of Hezekiah, when Nahum was prophesying. Again, Judah was to learn from the destruction of others who vainly hoped in Egypt. The only source of "infinite strength" is God; they treated human strength, Egypt, as God. "Helpers" is *ezrah*, and 'Hezekiah' is a compound of this word- 'Yah is my helper'. Nahum's words were an encouragement of Judah to trust in Yahweh's help alone, as all human help had been already demonstrated to be worth nothing.

Nahum 3:10 *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 honourable men, and all her senior leaders were bound in chains-* This language is all used about what was to come upon Israel and Judah (Is. 51:20). As Assyria had done to them, so they would do to God's people, unless they stopped trusting in Egypt. The simple principle is that what we do to others is done to us; not just because God likes poetic justice for the sake of it, but in order to help us realize how they felt, and thereby to come to repentance before God and unity and empathy with those we have sinned against.

Nahum 3:11 *You also will be drunken. You will go into hiding. You also will seek a stronghold because of the enemy-* The fortified palaces of the king of Nineveh were also the houses of his gods; and they provided no refuge when Nineveh was taken. It was a sad end- realizing that the entire spiritual narrative of their lives had been false. They would seek a place of refuge and hiding and not find it; their own teaching / narrative / worldview which they had given to others would itself make them drunk, unable to cope with the reality that they were being condemned and all their belief systems were unable to save them. This is the tragic picture of the condemned.

Nahum 3:12 *All your fortresses will be like fig trees with the first-ripe figs: if they are shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater-* Again, all human strength will be revealed as very fragile- a lesson for us all for all time. But first ripe figs is the image used to portray spiritual fruit upon God's people (Jer. 24:2; Hos. 9:10). Once again, there is the idea that the destruction of Nineveh would coincide with spiritual fruit upon God's people. This didn't exactly happen, and although Nineveh was indeed destroyed, the intended potentially possible scenario didn't happen; but it will, in the destruction of the latter day Assyrian and true repentance of Israel.

Nahum 3:13 *Behold, your troops in your midst are like women. The gates of your land are set wide open to your enemies. The fire has devoured your bars-* Elite soldiers and strong gates were the apparently invincible defences of Nineveh; again the message is that the highest human might and technology, the "picked troops" of Mic. 2:5, are unable to defend against God's judgment. We need to learn the lesson: all that seems a solid, invincible guarantee of our future will not save us. Only God in His Son, Yahoshua-Jesus, can save.

Nahum 3:14 *Draw water for the siege. Strengthen your fortresses-* The prophets continually decry all human strength, and so this is said not so much in sarcasm, but because God wants Nineveh to trust in its strength so that it would in due course repent upon seeing how worthless is any human strength. See on Nah. 2:1.

Go into the clay, and tread the mortar. Make the brick kiln strong- To produce bricks to repair the breaches made in their apparently invincible defences.

Nahum 3:15 *There the fire will devour you-* The fire of their brick kilns, making bricks to repair the breaches in their walls, would devour them. When the Medes took Nineveh, their king apparently burnt his palace over himself. He was devoured by the fire of his own trust in human strength.

The sword will cut you off. It will devour you like the grasshopper. You have multiplied like grasshoppers, bred like the locust- There had been a population explosion in Nineveh, and some historians include overpopulation as a reason for Assyria's decline. But numbers of human strength would not save them.

Nahum 3:16 *You have increased your merchants more than the stars of the skies-* It was the seed of Abraham who ultimately were to be more numerous than the stars of the skies. It was specifically Assyria's actions against that seed which made them so accountable to judgment.

The grasshopper strips, and flees away- The language of Joel 1 concerning the waves of Assyrian incursions into Judah. What they had done to Judah was to be done to them. As noted on :10, this was not just because God likes poetic justice for the sake of it, but in order to help them realize how they felt, and thereby to come to repentance before God and unity and empathy with those they had sinned against.

Nahum 3:17 *Your guards are like the locusts, and your officials like the swarms of locusts, which settle on the walls on a cold day, but when the sun appears, they flee away, and their place is not known where they are-* The distinctly Assyrian word *taphsar* used here is one of many reasons to think that Nahum lived in Assyria and prophesied from there; see on Nah. 1:1. The "guards" would have been from subjugated peoples, who would flee Nineveh. As noted on :8 and Nah. 2:8, we may be intended to understand here a call to flee from Nineveh; for ultimately, everyone would flee from her. Again, the Divine intention was that His exiled people repent and return to the land, now that Assyria was suddenly destroyed. But this didn't quite happen; because they didn't repent, just as it didn't quite happen as potentially possible when Babylon fell. The final fulfilment must be in the last days.

Nahum 3:18 *Your shepherds slumber, king of Assyria. Your nobles lie down, your people are scattered on the mountains, and there is no one to gather them-* Again, this is the language of Ez. 34 about the exiles of God's people, scattered on the mountains without a shepherd. Assyria was to experience what God's people such as Nahum had experienced. But as suggested on :17, this was not merely poetic justice; there was the inbuilt intention that as in Jonah's time, Nineveh might yet repent.

Nahum 3:19 *There is no healing for your wound, for your injury is fatal. All who hear the report of you clap their hands over you; for who hasn't felt your endless cruelty?-* The suggestion may be that this time, unlike in Jonah's time, Nineveh would not repent. There therefore would be no healing. Those who heard the report or news would rejoice; and I suggested on Nah. 1:1 that Nahum's prophecy was first given in Nineveh but was published also in Judah. There was to be joy in Judah on hearing this news; the endless cruelty was to end. "Endless" was how it felt; but it would end. This is another example of God's ability to use human language, even if it is technically

incorrect (as in the language of demon possession in the Gospels). He knows how we feel and perceive things, and wishes to reach out to us in those feelings.