

The Minor Prophets #17

Nahum

by: Ronald L. Dart

The house of Israel is gone the Assyrian have invaded, they took city after city then destroyed Samaria. They shattered King Ahab's famous house of ivory, I've seen shards of the ivory that archeologist recovered in their excavations at Samaria. The Bible says Ahab built him a house of ivory; well the Assyrian carried it off leaving shards behind.

The Assyrian also invaded Judah then they took Lachish finely they surrounded Jerusalem before God cut them off they were the Nazi of their day. They practiced wholesale deportations just like the Nazi's did only the people had to walk. There were no trains, no boxcars full of men women and children and the Assyrian rather than taking them somewhere and killing them, they just killed them where they stood. All the house of Israel was carried off and only the house of Judah remained, subjugated and diminished. Isaiah and Micah were prophets while all this was coming down and there is an interesting section in Isaiah as he takes off and begins to talk to Assyria because of what they had done.

It's in Chapter 10 Verse 5: **O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.**

In other words Assyrian is what God was going to use to chastise Israel. God says: **I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. However, he doesn't really intend to, neither does his heart think so; oh it is in his heart to destroy and to cut off not a few nations, because he says, Oh well, are not my princes are like kings? This city over here is it going to get any better? Is not Calno as Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria just like Damascus?**

He had long since taken Damascus why should Samaria think they could survive?

As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; Shall I not, as I have done to Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?

So the Assyrian gets, what we shall say a little big for his britches.

Isaiah 10 Verse 12: Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord has performed his whole work on mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

When all this get done when prophecy is fulfilled I'm going to whack the king of Assyria.

For he says by the strength of my hand I have done this and by my wisdom, because I am prudent. I have removed the bound of my people, I robbed their treasurer; I put down the king because I'm a valiant man. My hand has found like a nest the riches of the people and as one gathers eggs I have gathered all of the earth. There is no one that moved a wing or opened a mouth or even peeped, without me dealing with them. OK

God then says, **shall the axe boast himself against the man who hews with it, shall the saw magnify itself against him that shake it, as if a rod should shake itself against him who lifts it up, or the staff should lift itself up as if it were not just wood, therefore the LORD the LORD of host shall send among his fat one leanness and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.**

And this is interesting? He said **the light of Israel shall be the fire and his holy one for a flame and it will burn and devour the thorns and briers of Assyria in one day.**

Now that is really kind of interesting because I don't think anything like that really happened in history. When the Assyrians were finally taken down they were taken down by the Meads and other tribes of people up in that area it wasn't the Israelites that brought them down.

The Israelites were defeated people carried off into captivity and yet he says the time is going to come when the light that which Israel would use to light a fire. He's going to be for the fire and his holy one for a flame and he is going to burn and devour his thorns and briers in one day. That's suggestive that Israel does something to destroy these people.

I know prophecy is interesting in this regard, it is symbolic and the symbolism of it seems to recur in history and one lead to wonders how on earth somewhere off in our future this will happen again. The destruction of Assyria is laid out for us in graphic details and all he's going to do as he goes on.

Verse 21: A remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob unto the Mighty God, for though your people be as the sand of the sea, a remnant of them will be all that return.

Most readers think this return is Israel from Babylon but really in context it's about the house of Israel from Assyria and the destruction of Assyria. What came back from Babylon was the house of Judah that was taken captive much later by the Babylonian.

He says in Verse 24: **O my people that dwell in Zion, don't be afraid of the Assyrians he will smite you with a rod; he shall lift up his staff against you after the manner of Egypt.**

But he said the time is going to come when he was going to be broken and there's an interesting little passage here in Isaiah where it mentions a series of towns. It says he's comes to Aiath he pass through Migron, Micmash he laid up his carriage that's in preparation for the siege, they gone over the passage taking their lodging at Geba and Ramah is afraid, Gibeah of Saul has fled, all these towns around them are listed off one after the other.

One day I got out my Biblical atlas I looked up all these towns and they are along a rough route from Megiddo to Jerusalem. You know what Megiddo is, that's the famous Armageddon where the armies of the world gather at the very last day to march on Jerusalem and it almost looks as though the same pattern that happened with the Assyrian will happen once again at the time of the end.

It say's **he shall remain at Nob that day** that's the last stop on the way to Jerusalem, **he shall shake his hand against the mountain of the daughter of Zion and behold the LORD, the LORD of host shall lop the boughs with terror and the high ones with stature shall be cut down the haughty shall be humbled and he will cut down the thickets of the forest with iron. Lebanon shall fall by the mighty one.**

So Isaiah is the first to declare the destruction of Assyria then after Isaiah and Micah has passed from the scene there is Nahum.

We don't know a lot about Nahum he describes himself as an Elkoshite but no one knows where Elkosh is to date him. The date of his prophecy can be placed between 700 to 600 BC. He mentions in the book two particular dates. One is the destruction of the Egyptian capital Noe in about 636 to 630 BC the other event he is looking forward to is the destruction of Nineveh which hasn't happened yet in 612 BC. So Nahum is prophesying somewhere after 650 BC and probably close to the time of the fall of Nineveh.

A coalition of Meads, Babylonians, and Scythians attacked the Assyrian and destroyed Nineveh. So Nahum comes on the scene not that long before Assyria's fall, Jerusalem is still traumatized by the invasion of the Assyrian and no doubt praying for revenge.

Nahum titles his prophecy the burden of Nineveh and here is something very important to know when you read this. It was probably a work of music, performance art if

you will, it would resemble a Recitatif from Mendelssohn's Elijah or Handel's Messiah the different would be that the culture at that time seems to have had a 10 note scale instead of an 8 note we have today so it would have sound very strange to our ears. It may also have been a chant prophet commonly required a minstrel to play on a lute as they preached or were saying this Recitatif.

**The burden of Nineveh the book of the vision of
Nahum the Elkoshite.**

God is jealous the LORD revenges, the LORD revenges and is furious, the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries and he reserve wrath for his enemies.

This remark takes me back to the Messiah, Handel's Messiah and the base air why do the nations so furiously raged together, and this wonderful line he that dwelleth in the heavens shall laugh them to scorn he shall have them in derision.

Nahum continues: **The LORD is slow to anger and great in power and will not at all acquit the wicked, the LORD has his way in the whirlwind and the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry he dries up all the rivers: Bashan languishes and Carmel languishes and the flower of Lebanon languishes. The mountains quake in him and the hills melt and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all who dwells in it. Who can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire and the rocks are thrown down by him.**

Wow this is really a rocker at this particular point; I can't imagine what the orchestra would do with this. It's an interesting thing to think about though when he says he will not at all acquit the wicked. The wicked in the Bible, these are not your ordinary garden variety sinners you don't reach that point as a cat burglar who comes in to steal your jewelry. When Nahum talks about the wicked he is talking about the determined murderer of women and children. He is talking about people who torture about people who lie awake at night figuring out ways to hurt other people the wicked in the Bible are the scum of the earth. One of the things about this whole thing is that it was Gods intent that the Assyrian punish Israel but the Assyrian went way beyond anything God had intended for them to do.

Nahum continues now the LORD is good, we got some real contrast with what came before, because what came before was his anger at Assyria now he says: **The LORD is good a stronghold in the day of trouble he knows them that trust in him. But with an overrunning flood he will make an end an utter end of the place thereof and darkness shall pursue his enemies.** Plurals don't become an enemy of God.

What do you imagine against the LORD? He will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time. For while they are folded together like thorns and

while they are drunken like drunkards they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry. There is one that comes out of you that imagines evil against the LORD.

Now you in this particular case it is Assyria, Nineveh.

There is one that comes out of you that imagines evil against the LORD, a wicked counselor thus saith the LORD; though they are quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more. Talking to Israel. For now I will break his yoke from off you, and I will burst your bonds in sunder. And the LORD has given a commandment concerning you, that no more of your name be sown: out of the house of the gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make your grave; for you are vile.

Kind of hard places in here to find out who God is talking about. When you understand that on one hand there is Jerusalem king Hezekiah and on the other hand there is the king of Nineveh you'll work your way through these prophecies.

Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that brings good tidings that publishes peace! O Judah, keep your solemn feasts, perform your vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through you; he is utterly cut off.

A sad note at this point, he is talking about the Assyrian when he's talking about the wicked, because Jerusalem and Judah will utterly have someone come through them again it will just that time be the Babylonians.

Nahum Chapter 2: He that dashes in pieces is come up before your face; keep the munitions, watch your way, make your loins strong, fortify your power mightily. For the LORD has turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches.

It's important for you to understand what's happening here, the point of view, the place where Nahum is Jerusalem and they are looking at what happened to Samaria the one who dashes in pieces and the call goes out fortify yourself, fortify your power mightily because the LORD has turned away from the Excellency of Jacob as for the emptier that emptied them out and marred their vine branches so consequently you better get yourself ready because God is going to let them come.

The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken. You know these big old fir trees because of the thundering of chariots going by they will stand there and shake. The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they will run like the lightning. He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in

their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defense shall be prepared. The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.

Well now there aren't any river around Jerusalem so we're looking again back toward Nineveh which is up there along the Tigris river, and often time these cities like Nineveh and then later like Babylon had to deal with the river and used the river as part of their defense. In Babylon's case there were gates across the river and their enemies when they got ready to take them later on built a dam across the river let the water drop and walked in under the gates.

Huzzab shall be led away captive she shall be brought up and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of dove's tabering upon their breasts. But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand shall the cry; but no one shall look back. They all will be running away. Take the spoil of silver take the spoil of gold: for there is no end of the store and glory out of all the pleasant furniture. She is empty and void and waste: and the heart melts and the knees smite together and much pain is in all loins as the faces of them all gather blackness.

Kind of a terrible picture of what's going to happen in Nineveh who will be so terrified their knees will smite together and their faces will turn black men will turn and run for their lives from the Meade's and other who are taking their capital city.

Where is the dwelling of the lions and the feeding place of the young lions where the lion even the old lion walked and the lion's whelp and none made them afraid? Where are they? The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps and strangled for his lionesses and filled his holes with prey and his dens with ravin. Where's he gone? Behold, I am against thee said the LORD of hosts and I will burn her chariots in the smoke and the sword shall devour your young lions: and I will cut off your prey from the earth and the voice of you messengers shall no more be heard.

Nahum Chapter 3 – Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departs not; the noise of the whip the noise of the rattling of the wheels and of the prancing horses and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifts 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 no end of their corpses; they stumble over their corpses.

Boy this is really tuff reading here when you look at what happened to the city of Nineveh but the thing is the description could have just easily have been a city that was conquered by Nineveh. For it seems that what the Lord has done with Nineveh is to take right back upon her precisely what she did to others. And elsewhere in another prophecy God says of the Assyrian's, I intended for them to punish Israel, I intended for them to come down and take these people captive but they went way beyond anything I commissioned them to do and therefore I'm going to bring it right back on their own heads.

Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well favored harlot the mistress of witchcrafts that sells nations through her whoredoms and families through her witchcrafts. Behold, I am against you said the LORD of hosts; and I will discover your skirts upon your face, and I will show all the nations your nakedness and all the kingdoms your shame. I will cast abominable filth upon you, and make you vile.

You know this is really ugly and somehow it seem necessary to impress upon people's mind especially the people living in Jerusalem all the terrible things that had been done were not going to go unrequited against Assyria.

And it shall come to pass that all they that look upon you shall run away and say Nineveh is laid waste: who's going to bemoan her? Where are we to look for comforters for you? Well you're not going to find any. You think you're better than populous No, that's the capital of Egypt. That was situated among the rivers that had all the waters round about it, do you think you're going to be better than they are; you're going to survive when they could not. Their rampart was the sea and her wall was from the sea? Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength and it was infinite. Now who's going to help you? Yet Egypt was carried away she went into captivity: her young children were also 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.

They just line them up and chain them all together, and sold them off or gave them away with lots as slaves. As for children they're too much trouble so they just dashed them to pieces on the stairs. This is awful to think of what happened but I guess it's a good thing for us to know exactly what war is like, exactly where war goes. This is what happens to a people who lived their lives in this way when the time comes for God to take vengeance.

You also shall be drunk: you shall be hid; you also shall seek strength because of the enemy. All your strong holds shall be like fig trees with the first ripe figs: if they shake them everything falls right into the mouth of the eater. All your cities all your fortresses just give it shake and you will fall into their mouth. Behold, your people in the midst of you are women: the gates of your land shall be set wide open to your enemies: the fire shall devour all the bars of the gates. Draw yourself waters for the siege, fortify your strong holds: go into clay tread the mortar make strong the bricks kiln. Fix up your walls. There the fires will devour you; the sword shall cut you off it will eat you up like the cankerworm: make yourself many as the cankerworm; make yourself many as the locusts. And you're still going to be eaten up. You have multiplied your merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoils and flies away. Your crowned are like locusts and your captains as the great grasshoppers which camp in the hedges in the cold day but when the sun arises they flee away and their place is not known where they are.

You can't even tell where they were. All your great men all your princes when the heat comes will run for their lives. **Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria:** they should be watching for but they're asleep. **Your nobles shall dwell in the dust: your people are scattered upon the mountains and nobody looks for them. There is no healing of your bruise; your wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of you shall clap the hands over you: for upon who has not the wickedness passed continually?**

You know when the world hears what has happened to you it will break out into applause, now that is something to think about. That's the end of Nahum prophecy about Nineveh, did anyone prophecies to Nineveh, as it happens. Yes. His name is Jonah but we'll have to talk about him another day.

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