

The Prophets

Lesson #34

Nahum

Outline

I. ***The Destruction Of Nineveh Is Decreed (1:1-15)***

- A. The general principles of divine judgment (1:1-8).
 - 1. God's vengeance in judgment (1:1-2).
 - 2. God's power in judgment (1:3-8).
- B. The destruction of Nineveh and deliverance of Judah (1:9-15).

II. ***The Destruction Of Nineveh Is Described (2:1-13)***

- A. The call to battle (2:1-2).
- B. The destruction of Nineveh (2:3-13).

III. ***The Destruction Of Nineveh Is Deserved (3:1-19)***

- A. The reasons for the destruction of Nineveh (3:1-11).
 - 1. Nineveh's great ungodliness (3:1-7).
 - 2. Comparison of Nineveh to No-amon (3:8-11).
- B. The destruction of Nineveh is inevitable (3:12-19).
 - 1. Nineveh's strongholds are weak (3:12-15).
 - 2. Nineveh's leaders are weak (3:16-19).

Notes

Nahum 1:1-15

- The general principles of divine judgment (1:1-8).
 - God's vengeance in judgment (1:1-2).
 - "Burden" literally means a heavy load to be borne or to be lifted up. Here, and in the writings of other prophets, it means to lift up the voice in proclamation, an utterance or prophecy, denouncing the sins of a people by pronouncing on them or their place of habitation a heavy judgment.
 - "Jealous" means God's deep, fiercely protective commitment to His people and His exclusive claim to obedience and commitment. Vs. 2 lays a foundation for the entire prophecy; all that follows is rooted in this revelation of the justice and burning zeal of the Lord exercised on behalf of His people.
 - God's power in judgment (1:3-8).
 - God's slowness to anger is not an indication of weakness, but of His Godhood; He does not act impulsively, but exercises His great power with caution and reserve.
 - "Bashan" in Transjordan, "Carmel" in northern Israel and the "Lebanon" range on Israel's northern frontier are frequently repre-

sented together as the choicest forest and pasture regions of Canaan.

- The goodness of God forms a basic tenet of Israel's faith. Also, it repeatedly forms the basis for human faith, expressed in trusting obedience; where the goodness of God is called into question with success, faith soon crumbles.
- The destruction of Nineveh and deliverance of Judah (1:9-15).
 - God's answer is that He will make a full end of the Assyrians; affliction will not again arise against Judah as it did in the days of Ahaz and Hezekiah. God promised the destruction of Assyria (Isaiah 10:24-27), and now the time has come for the fulfillment of that prophecy.
 - The commandment given is from God with whom Nineveh will deal, instead of dealing with the idol gods of other nations as she had in the past. As Assyria had destroyed the idol gods of conquered peoples and had carried other images as booty to Nineveh, so now would her deities be destroyed or carried away.
 - While Isaiah had used practically the same expression in vs. 15 in a Messianic context (40:9; 52:7), Nahum uses it of the herald of good tidings who brings the news that Nineveh has fallen.

Nahum 2:1-13

- The call to battle (2:1-2).
 - The one who would come as an attack is not named in this section, but history tells us that the combined forces of Nabopolassar of Babylon and Cyaxares of the Medes as the destroyers.
 - The "excellency" of the nation is that in which she should have been proud: her honor, self-respect and glory which were given her by God and which should have grown out of her relation to God.
- The destruction of Nineveh (2:3-13).
 - "He that dasheth in pieces" is vividly described. The attack is led by the invader's chariot forces, the most formidable wing of an army fighting in open terrain. They even appear as flashes of lightning as they dash about.
 - All efforts at defense are vain; the city is destined to be destroyed. It is determined by God that Nineveh, which has so long been the mistress of the world, would be brought to an end, dissolved and carried away. As the proud city comes to an end, Nahum provides pictures of deep anguish and sorrow.
 - Nineveh is no longer a gathering place; she is now a place to be avoided. The treasures of Nineveh were seemingly unlimited; they were the accumulation of centuries. Now, she was "empty, and void, and waste."

- The king of Nineveh had provided for his young by plundering the nations of the world, tearing them in pieces. However, he was not content with this and he "filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin."

Nahum 3:1-19

- The reasons for the destruction of Nineveh (3:1-11).
 - Nineveh's great ungodliness (3:1-7).
 - A miserable and sorrowful fate is to befall the city stained with blood. Because of continued warfare and the rape of the nations, the store of booty had not been extinguished. There follows one of the most moving descriptions of the fierceness of a battle to be found in any literature.
 - The fierceness of battle ends with the corpses of the dead scattered everywhere and with men stumbling over them in their rush from place to place as the battle waxes hot.
 - Like a vile and low woman, exposed to the world for what she is, and upon whom the people cast disdain and reproach, so would be the lot of Nineveh. There will be none to bemoan her, no comforters to give her consolation. The message of her fall would be glad tidings to the ears of the world that had suffered so severely at her hands.
 - Comparison of Nineveh to No-amon (3:8-11).
 - No-amon, the city of the god Amon, was the Thebes of upper Egypt and was located about 450 miles south of Cairo. Thebes had intermittent periods of great glory as the capital of Egypt from Middle Kingdom times (c. 2160–1580) onward. However, in 663 B.C., it had been destroyed by Ashurbanipal, ruler of Assyria.
 - The prophet now asks if Nineveh is greater than No-amon, the great city that had been destroyed by Nineveh. Nineveh would be "drunken" as decreed by the Lord (1:10). She would seek "strength" in vain, for she trusted in carved images and idols.
 - Not all were carried away, but the city was left in such a state that it never recovered from the fall at the hands of Ashurbanipal.
- The destruction of Nineveh is inevitable (3:12-19).
 - Nineveh's strongholds are weak (3:12-15).
 - For Nineveh no refuge would be forthcoming. Her "strongholds" guarding the approach to Nineveh were ripe for destruction.
 - The reason for the rapid fall of the strongholds is the people who occupied them. The Assyrians had been a brave people, but the old fire and strength of previous years was gone.
 - The prophet calls ironically upon the people of Nineveh to provide for the siege; for in spite of all she could do, destruction was in-

evitable. A complete destruction by the sword is decreed as the swarms of enemy soldiers seek out the individuals for death.

- Nineveh's leaders are weak (3:16-19).
 - Like locusts, Nineveh's merchants proliferated beyond measure; and they likewise "spoil" the land. The comparison to locusts introduces a further element: like locusts, these "merchants" also "flieth away," unconcerned for the region they have exploited.
 - The "king" refers not simply to the last king, but personifies the rule of her line of kings; the line has come to an end. The "shepherds" and "nobles" are the leaders, counselors and great men of the nation who now "slumber" in death.
 - The wound is such that it can never be repaired; it is final. The brief attempt by Ashur-uballit to keep the dynasty alive in Haran failed two years later. The rejoicing is not necessarily the expression of glee, but it is a rejoicing over the vindication of righteousness. The whole earth had felt the pain of Nineveh's destruction and cruelty.