

Outline of Nahum

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The Burden Against Nineveh

Nahum, Part Two

Nahum 1:1a

Stuart W. Bryan

I. The Spirit of Christ in them (1 Pet 1:10-12)

¹⁰Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, ¹¹searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. ¹²To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

II. The Burden Against Nineveh

A. Some Observations on Nineveh (cf. Gen 10:10-12; 2 Kgs 17)

Nineveh had originally been founded by Nimrod, a descendant of Noah's son Ham.

¹⁰And the beginning of [Nimrod's] kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. ¹¹From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh... (Gen 10:10)

While Nimrod founded the city, the Assyrians inhabited it and traced their origin to Asshur, a descendant of Noah's son Shem (Gen 10:22). Over the centuries, the Assyrians became well-known for their military might and cruelty.

Assyrian expansion began to impact Israel in the 10th century BC (900s). After a period of decline in the late 9th and early 8th centuries BC (during which the prophet Jonah visited the city), Assyria expanded again and conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in _____ BC. Assyria reached the height of their power under Ashurbanipal (668-627 BC) who conquered the Egyptian capital of Thebes, c. 656BC.



B. Prophesying Against Nineveh (cp. Is 10:5-19; Zeph 2:13-15)

It was likely during Ashurbanipal's reign that God called Nahum to write his prophecy against Nineveh. He calls his prophecy a "_____." The word certainly conveys the idea of an *oracle* or *revelation* – but it is an *oracle* that has weight, substance, gravitas. It is a prophecy of destruction, of judgment, of doom. Nahum writes *against Nineveh*. Zephaniah likewise prophesied:

¹³And [Yahweh] will stretch out His hand against the north, Destroy Assyria, And make Nineveh a desolation, As dry as the wilderness. ¹⁴The herds shall lie down in her midst, Every beast of the nation. Both the pelican and the bittern Shall lodge on the capitals of her pillars; Their voice shall sing in the windows; Desolation shall be at the threshold; For He will lay bare the cedar work. ¹⁵This is the rejoicing city That dwelt securely, That said in her heart, "I am it, and there is none besides me." How has she become a desolation, A place for beasts to lie down! Everyone who passes by her Shall hiss and shake his fist. (Zephaniah 2:13–15)



The Monuments of Nineveh
Sir Austen Henry Layard, 1853

III. The Weight of God's Judgments

A. Why not Jonah? (Jonah 4:1-11 cp. Gen 15:13,16; 2 Pet 3:8-9)

Why didn't God choose Jonah to announce the irrevocable judgment on Nineveh? There are two answers to this question. The first is that though Nineveh's "wickedness" had come up before God (Jonah 1:2), God was not yet ready to destroy this city; He still desired to show them pity for He is incredibly longsuffering (cf. 2 Pet 3:8-9).

Second, Jonah wasn't given this message because it would not have been a *burden* for him to preach it, it would have been a _____. Jonah *wanted* to deliver this message. Remember Jonah's complaint after God relents from judging Nineveh:

¹But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. ²So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. ³Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!" ⁴Then the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" (Jonah 4:1-4)

B. Distorting the Character of God (Ex 34:6-7 cf. Lk 4:18-19; 18:9-14)

Jonah quotes from God's revelation of His Name to Moses:

⁶And the LORD passed before [Moses] and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, ⁷keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty [unrepentant/wicked], visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." (Ex 34:6-7)

Notice that God reveals His character to Moses. He is a God of mercy and justice; in Him, mercy and justice meet, they kiss. But which comes first? Mercy. Thus, it is far better to err extending mercy than to err enforcing "justice". But when we reverse these traits – when we reverse *the kindness and severity of God* (Rom 11:22) – we become _____-righteous rather than _____ (cp. Lk 18:9ff).

C. God's Judgments as a Burden (Ps 119:136; Is 6:9-13; Jer 9:1-2; Mt 23)

Nahum's message was a burden because Nahum knew the compassion of the Lord and longed for others to encounter that same compassion. But Nineveh could not; her doom was sealed and in her fall thousands of men, women, and children made in God's image would perish (cp. Jonah 4:11). The city would *become a desolation* and this was a *burden* to Nahum. In this Nahum reveals our Lord Jesus' heart of compassion (Mt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34; Mk 1:41; 9:22; Lk 7:13; 10:33; 15:20). Even when Jesus issued Nahum-like woes on the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy, sin, and greed (Mt 23:1-36), He closed His woes with a lament:

³⁷"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁸See! Your house is left to you desolate..." (Matthew 23:37-39)

IV. Conclusion