

Nahum

Whereas Jonah's prophecy against Nineveh in the mid 8th century BC, approximately 760 BC, resulted in repentance by the population and graceful mercy from God, the prophecy of Nahum against Nineveh in the mid to late 7th century BC, between 663 and 612 BC, was not followed by repentance and mercy, but rather the end of Nineveh and Assyrian hegemony as the prophets had foretold. Nineveh fell to the reemerging Babylonian empire in 612 BC, and was subsequently lost to history. Nineveh was utterly reduced to ruins, completely abandoned, and then lost to the shifting soil of the centuries. Skeptics in the 19th century doubted that the great Biblical city of Nineveh ever existed until archaeologists rediscovered the ancient ruins and verified the truth of the Biblical prophets and historical accounts.

The attributes of God in 1:2 are often willfully overlooked, but nevertheless to be reckoned with. He cares passionately about his people, and his reputation, and attacking either is a course toward disaster. His involvement in his creation is unabated (1:3-6) and he can and does use the forces of nature to humble his opponents. Yet, he is a secure fortress for those who trust in him (1:7).

Notice in v10 the frequently mentioned (by the prophets) role of intoxication in opposition to God.

Notice in 1:12-13 that the end of Nineveh was a symbolic respite for the people of God. The judgment of Nineveh in v14 presages the coming of the good news (gospel) in v15 as pictured 100 years earlier in Isaiah 52:7 and claimed by Paul for the church in Romans 10:15. Judah needed to keep on doing her services under the Law in expectation of the greater deliverance to come (1:15b).

As Peter wrote in 2 Peter 2, God's judgements against the rebellious in the past are emblematic of God's ability to judge and deliver his people in the present and for the future. In that sense Nineveh is any great power in any generation that serves God's purpose for a time and then falls condemned for their wickedness and rebellion against the almighty and abuse of the poor, the powerless, and the people of God. Consequently, the great show of Assyrian might, pomp and circumstance and movement and noise, amounts to nothing and the plunderer was about to be plundered. The outcry of 2:13 is the toll of doom for people and nations, Nineveh in the 8th century BC, or any people or nation in the 21st century.

The violence, injustice, and immorality of Assyrian culture is highlighted in 3:1-4, and again in 3:5 as in 2:13, "Behold, I am against you, declares the LORD of hosts."

Assyria had plundered and destroyed Thebes (No Amon) in Egypt in 663 BC, now Assyria's turn for the same had come around (3:8). She who sent other nations into exile was doomed to the same fate (3:10). This is the nature of divine justice.

Many of the prophets end on a note of hope, some glimpse of future deliverance for God's people in the coming kingdom, but Nahum ends as he began with the totality of God's judgment against Nineveh. The notes of future hope in Nahum are in the first half of the book, 1:7, 12b-13,

15, 2:2. Sometimes deliverance for God's people comes necessarily in the form of divine retribution against their oppressors.