

NAHUM and Nineveh

Our next prophet belongs to the time of Jeremiah. The whole of his short book is devoted to the graphic description of a world-shaking event - the fall of Nineveh, capital of Assyria, which took place in 612 BC. The prophet Jonah, whom we have already met, had reluctantly visited the same city over a century before. Then God had spared his judgments on the city because the Assyrians repented. After that Hezekiah had narrowly escaped from losing Jerusalem to their armies. But now their arrogance and their heartless cruelty were going to be brought to an end. God, who watches and judges nations, had decided their time had come. As verse three of the first chapter intones, the Lord is slow to anger. But He will not clear the unrepentant guilty.

If you like poetry, this is a book you cannot miss! Listen to this description of the sacking of Nineveh:

“The chariots race madly through the streets; they rush to and fro through the squares; they gleam like torches; they dart like lightning.

He remembers his officers; they stumble as they go, they hasten to the wall; the siege tower is set up.

The river gates are opened; the palace melts away;

Its mistress is stripped; she is carried off, her slave girls lamenting, moaning like doves and beating their breasts.

Nineveh is like a pool whose waters run away. “Halt! Halt!” they cry, but none turns back.

Plunder the silver, plunder the gold! There is no end of the treasure or of the wealth of all precious things.

Desolate! Desolation and ruin! Hearts melt and knees tremble; anguish is in all loins; all faces grow pale!”

“The crack of the whip, and rumble of the wheel, galloping horse and bounding chariot!

Horsemen charging, flashing sword and glittering spear, hosts of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end-- they stumble over the bodies!” chapter 2:4-10;3:2,3

Nahum’s message came true. The destruction of Nineveh was complete. It was never rebuilt, and the site was unknown until the English adventurer **Sir Henry Layard** came to the Middle East, and in 1845 began to excavate a large mound near the Tigris. Here he found clay tablets and inscriptions which proved beyond doubt he had found the remains of the great capital, buried under the sand. Many of the giant sculptures and bas-reliefs which once graced the throne room of the palace can be seen today in the Assyrian Galleries in the **British Museum** and the **Louvre**.

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