

November 21

Scriptures: Read Nahum 3

Key Verse: “Because of the multitude of harlotries ... ‘Behold, I am against you,’ says the LORD of Hosts...” (Nahum 3:4, 5)

Overview

Nahum chapter three begins with a most appropriate description of Nineveh. He calls it “the bloody city”, for Nineveh was notorious for her cruelty and killings. Wherever they went, they shed much blood, and even within the city walls there were many executions. Nineveh gained her wealth and strength by breaking treaties with nations and then defeating and plundering them (“full of lies and robbery”). With the exception of the few years following the preaching of Jonah, Nineveh had always been victimizing those around them, both far and near (3:1). But as Nahum prophesied, Nineveh was soon to reap that which she had sown.

Nahum describes the battle in such graphic terms that his readers can almost hear the clash of swords. As the Ninevites fled before the invading army, they stumbled over the numerous corpses of those slain in the streets. Some have estimated that 600,000 people lived within the city walls of Nineveh. Nahum explains that this disaster was to come upon Nineveh because of her lack of morality and her worship of the occult. Like a seductive harlot, she deceived many nations and led them down the path of death (3:4; cf. Prov. 7:11,27). In the day of the Lord’s judgment, Nineveh would be put to shame and exposed for what she really is — something vile and filthy. There would be no one to come to her aid, nor will anyone bemoan her downfall; all will flee from her, lest they share in her calamity (3:7).

To illustrate the possibility of Nineveh’s downfall, Nahum points to the destruction of No Amon (Ancient Thebes), the capital of upper Egypt. Since No Amon had many strong allies in northern Africa, it had more advantages than Nineveh; yet it still fell to the Assyrians in 663 B.C. The ruthless Assyrian invaders brutally killed the children and babies and took all the noble people captive. If God did not spare No Amon, then He would not spare Nineveh, for Nineveh was no better (3:8). Naham declares that just as the Assyrians had done to others, it would be done to them. They would be drunk by drinking the cup of the Lord’s fury (cf. Isa. 51:17, 21-23; Jer. 25:15-29), and they would now be the ones to run and hide from the enemy (3:11).

Nahum describes the ease with which the Medo-Babylonian invaders would take Nineveh. It would be as easy as shaking ripe figs off a tree, and in such a way the enemy would devour Nineveh (3:12). Such fear would grip the people that even the mighty warriors would be rendered defenceless, like women who have no swords (3:13). Before the besiegers broke through the wall, the populace of Nineveh busied themselves by storing water and making bricks to reinforce the walls. But, as Nahum ironically taunts, it would be of no avail (3:14-15). With the flooding of the land, the wall was easily breached. Nineveh’s gates were then opened wide for all the soldiers and chariots to enter and cause havoc. When they had finished slaughtering and pillaging, they burnt the city (3:13b). Archeological excavations at the end of the nineteenth century have proven the accuracy of Nahum’s prophecy.

With an analogy from nature, Nahum describes the behaviour of Nineveh's military leaders. Like a cold grasshopper that doesn't move, those once noted for their bravery would become paralyzed when they realized that doom was upon them; and, when the heat or pressure would come upon them, they would disappear from sight as grasshoppers do when the sun warms them (3:17). These high ranking military leaders forsook the city and fled for their lives at the time they were needed most. The fate of the defenceless city leaders and nobles would be to slumber in death and lie in the dust, except for those young enough to be profitable slaves (3:18). The wound given to Nineveh would never heal. She was never to rise again (3:19a). Not only would Judah rejoice at the vindication of God's righteousness (1:15), but so would all the other nations of the world that had been continually suffering from Nineveh's oppression (3:19b). Nahum's prophecy illustrates well the sovereignty of God in history. He lifts up nations and puts them down according to His plan, which is always for the good of His people.

Prayer

Father God, we honour You for who You are. Help us to live in such a way that others will honour You also.