

CHAPTER 3

This chapter goes on with the burden of Nineveh, and concludes it.

I. The sins of that great city are charged upon it, murder (v. 1), whoredom and witchcraft (v. 4), and a general extent of wickedness (v. 19).

II. Judgments are here threatened against it, blood for blood (v. 2, 3), and shame for shameful sins (v. 5-7).

III. Instances are given of the like desolations brought upon other places for the like sins (v. 8-11).

IV. The overthrow of all those things which they depended upon, and put confidence in, is foretold (v. 12-19).

~~301~~ NAHUM 3:1-7

THE JUDGMENT OF NINEVEH

Here is,

I. Nineveh arraigned and indicted. It is a high charge that is here drawn up against that great city, and neither her numbers nor her grandeur shall secure her from prosecution.

1. It is a *city of blood*, in which a great deal of innocent blood is shed by unrighteous war, or under colour and pretence of public justice, or by suffering barbarous murders to go unpunished; for this the righteous God will make inquisition.

2. *It is all full of lies*; truth is banished from among them; there is no such thing as honesty; one knows not whom to believe nor whom to trust.

3. It is all full of *robbery* and rapine; no man cares what mischief he does, nor to whom he does it: *The prey departs not*, that is, they never know when they have got enough by spoil and oppression. They shed blood, and told lies, in pursuit of the prey, that they might enrich themselves.

4. There is a *multitude of whoredoms* in it, that is, idolatries, spiritual whoredoms, by which she defiled herself, and to which she seduced the neighbouring nations, as a well-favoured harlot, and sold and ruined *nations through her whoredoms*.

5. She is a *mistress of witchcrafts*, and by them she *sells families*, v. 4. That which Nineveh aimed at was a universal monarchy, to be the metropolis of the world, and to have all her neighbours under her feet; to compass this, she used not only arms, but arts, compelling some, deluding others, into subjection to her, and wheedling them as a harlot by her charms to lay their necks under her yoke, suggesting to them that it would be for their advantage. She courted them to join with her in her idolatrous rites, to tie them the faster to her interests, and made use of her wealth, power, and greatness, to draw people into alliances with her, by which she gained advantages over them, and made a hand of them. These were her whoredoms, like those of Tyre, ^{<2276>}Isaiah 23:15, 17. These were her witchcrafts, with which she unaccountably gained dominion. And for this that God has a quarrel with her who, having *made of one blood all nations of men*, never designed one to be a nation of tyrants and another of slaves, and who claims it as his own prerogative to be universal Monarch.

II. Nineveh condemned to ruin upon this indictment. Woe to this bloody city! v. 1. See what this woe is.

1. Nineveh had with her cruelties been a terror and destruction to others, and therefore destruction and terror shall be brought upon her. Those that are for overthrowing all that come in their way will, sooner or later, meet with their match.

(1.) Hear the alarm with which Nineveh shall be terrified, v. 2. It is a formidable army that advances against it; you may hear them at a distance, the *noise of the whip*, driving the chariot-horses with fury; you may hear the noise of the *rattling of the wheels, the prancing horses, and the jumping chariots*; the very noise is frightful, but much more so when they know that all this force is coming with all this speed against them, and they are not able to make head against it.

(2.) See the slaughter with which Nineveh shall be laid waste (v. 3), the sword drawn with which execution shall be done, *the bright sword lifted up and the glittering spear*, the dazzling brightness of which is very terrible to those whom they are lifted up against. See what havoc these

make when they are commissioned to slay: *There is a great number of carcasses*, for the slain of the land shall be many; *there is no end of their corpses*; there is such a *multitude of slain* that it is in vain to go about to take the number of them; they lie so thick that passengers are ready to stumble *upon their corpses* at every step. The destruction of Sennacherib's army, which, in the morning, were *all dead corpses*, is perhaps looked upon here as a figure of the like destruction that should afterwards be in Nineveh; for those that will not take warning by judgments at a distance shall have them come nearer.

2. Nineveh had with her whoredoms and witchcrafts drawn others to shameful wickedness, and therefore God will load her with shame and contempt (v. 5-7): *The Lord of hosts is against her*, and then she shall be exposed to the highest degree of disgrace and ignominy, shall not only lose all her charms, but shall be made to appear very odious. When it shall be seen that while she courted her neighbours it was with design to ruin their liberty and property, when all her wicked artifices shall be brought to light, then her *shame is discovered to the nations*. When her proud pretensions are baffled, and her vain towering hopes of an absolute and universal dominion brought to nought, and she appears not to have been so strong and considerable as she would have been thought to be, then *to see the nakedness of the land do they come*, and it appears ridiculous. Then do they *cast abominable filth upon her*, as upon a carted strumpet, and *make her vile* as the offscouring of all things; that great city, which all nations had made court to and coveted an alliance with, has become a gazing-stock, a laughing stock. Those that formerly looked upon her, and fled to her, in hopes of protection from her, now *look upon her and flee from her*, for fear of being ruined with her. Note, Those that abuse their honour and interest will justly be disgraced and abandoned, and, because miserable, will be made contemptible, and thereby be made more miserable. When Nineveh is laid waste *who will bemoan her?* Her trouble will be so great, and her sense of it so deep, as not to admit relief from sympathy, or any comforting considerations; or, if it would, none shall do any such good office: *When shall I seek comforters for thee?* Note, Those that showed no pity in the day of their power can expect to find no pity in the day of their fall. When those about Nineveh, that had been deceived by her wiles, come to be undeceived in her ruin, every one shall insult over her, and none bemoan her. This was Nineveh's fate, when she was made a spectacle, or gazing-stock. Note, The greater men's show was in the day of

their abused prosperity the greater will their shame be in the day of their deserved destruction. *I will make thee an example*; so Drusus reads it. Note, When proud sinners are humbled and brought down it is designed that others should take example by them not to lift up themselves in security and insolence when they prosper in the world.

~~3088~~ NAHUM 3:8-19

THE JUDGMENT OF NINEVEH

Nineveh has been told that God is against her, and then none can be for her, to stand her in any stead; yet she sets God himself at defiance, and his power and justice, and says, *I shall have peace*. Threatened folks live long; therefore here the prophet largely shows how vain her confidences would prove and insufficient to ward off the judgment of God. To convince them of this,

I. He shows them that other places, which had been as strong and as secure as they, could not keep their ground against the judgments of God. Nineveh shall fall unpitied and uncomforted (for miserable comforters will those prove who speak peace to those on whom God will fasten trouble), and she shall not be able to help herself: *Art thou better than populous No?* v. 8. He takes them off from their vain confidences by quoting precedents. The city mentioned is *No*, a great city in the land of Egypt (~~2465~~ Jeremiah 46:25), *No-Ammon*, so some read it both there and here. We read of it, ~~3514~~ Ezekiel 30:14-16. Some think it was *Diospolis*, others *Alexandria*. As God said to Jerusalem, *Go, see what I did to Shiloh* (~~2472~~ Jeremiah 7:12), so to Nineveh that great city, *Go, see what I did to populous No*. Note, It will help to keep us in a holy fear of the judgments of God to consider that we are not better than those that have fallen under those judgments before us. We deserve them as much, and are as little able to grapple with them. This also should help to reconcile us to afflictions. Are we better than such and such, who were in like manner exercised? Nay, were not they better than we, and less likely to be afflicted? Now, concerning *No*, observe,

1. How firm her standing seemed to be, v. 8. She was fortified both by nature and art, was *situate among the rivers*. Nile, in several branches, not only watered her fields, but guarded her wall. *Her rampart was the sea*,

the *lake of Mareotis*, an Egyptian sea, like the sea of Tiberias. Her *wall was from the sea*; it was fenced with a wall which was thought to make the place impregnable. It was also supported by its interests and alliances abroad, v. 9. *Ethiopia*, or Arabia, *was her strength*, either by the wealth brought to her in a way of trade or by the auxiliary forces furnished for military service. The whole country of Egypt also contributed to the strength of this populous city; so that it was *infinite, and there was no end of it* (so it might be rendered); She set no bounds to her ambition and knew no end of her wealth and strength; people flocked to her endlessly, and she thought there never would be any end of it; but it is God's prerogative to be infinite. *Put and Lubim were thy helpers*, two neighbouring countries of Africa, Mauritania and Libya, that is, Libya Cyrenica, a country that Egypt had much dependence upon. No, thus helped, seemed to sit as a queen, and was not likely to see any sorrow. But,

2. See how fatal her fall proved to be (v, 10): *Yet was she carried away*, and her strength failed her; even she that was so strong, so secure, yet *went into captivity*. This refers to some destruction of that city which was then well-known, and probably fresh in memory, though not recorded in history; for the destruction of it by Nebuchadnezzar (if we should understand this prophetically) could not be made an example to Nineveh; for the reducing of Nineveh was one of the first of his victories and that of Egypt one of the last. The strength and grandeur of that great city could not be its protection from military execution.

(1.) Not from that which was most barbarous; for *her young children* had no compassion shown them, but were *dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets* by the merciless conquerors.

(2.) Not from that which was most inglorious and disgraceful: *They cast lots for her honourable men* that were made prisoners of war, who should have them for their slaves. So many had they of them that they knew not what to do with them, but they made sport with throwing dice for them; *all her great men*, that used to be adorned on state-days with chains of gold, *were now bound in chains of iron*; they were *pinioned* or *handcuffed* (so the word properly signifies), not only as slaves, but as condemned malefactors. What a mortification was this to *populous No*, to have her honourable men and great men, that were her pride and confidence, thus abused! Now hence he infers against Nineveh (v. 11), "Thou also shalt be intoxicated, infatuated; thou also shalt reel and stagger, as drunk with the

cup of the Lord's fury, that shall be put into thy hand" (see ²⁵⁷Jeremiah 25:17, 27); "*Thou shalt fall and rise no more. The cup shall go round, and come to thy turn, O Nineveh! to drink off at last, and shall be to thee as the waters of jealousy.*"

II. He shows them that all those things which they reposed a confidence in should fail them.

1. Did the men of Nineveh trust to their own magnanimity and bravery? Their hearts should sink and fail them. *They shall be hid*, shall abscond for shame, being in disgrace, abscond for fear, being in distress and danger, and not able to face the enemies, because of whose strength and terror, having no strength of their own, they shall *seek strength*, shall come sneaking to their neighbours to beg their assistance in a time of need. Thus God can *cut off the spirit* of princes, and *take away their heart*.

2. Did they depend upon their barrier, the garrisons and strongholds they had, which were regularly fortified and bravely manned? Those shall prove but paper-walls, and *like the first-ripe figs*, which, if you give the tree but a little shake, will *fall into the mouth of the eater* that gapes for them; so easily will all their strongholds be made to surrender to the advancing enemy, upon the first summons, v. 12. Note, Strongholds, even the strongest, are no fence against the judgments of God, when they come with commission. *The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and a high wall*, but only *in his own conceit*, ²⁸⁰Proverbs 18:10. They are supposed to make their strongholds as strong as possible, and are challenged to do their utmost to make them tenable, and serviceable to them against the invader (v. 14): *Draw thee water for the siege*; lay in great quantities of water, that that which is so necessary to the support of human life may not be wanting; it is put here for all manner of provision, with which Nineveh is ironically told to furnish herself, in expectation of a siege. "Take ever so much care that thou mayest not be starved out, and forced by famine to surrender, yet that shall not avail. *Fortify the strongholds*, by adding out-works to them, or putting men and arms into them," as with us by planting cannon upon them. "*Go into clay, and tread the mortar, and make strong the brick-kiln*; take all the pains thou canst in erecting new fortifications; but it shall be all in vain, for (v. 15) there shall even *the fire devour thee* if it be taken by storm." It is by fire and sword that in time of war the great devastations are made.

3. Did they put confidence in the multitude of their inhabitants? Were they, from their number and valour, reckoned their strongest walls and fortifications? Alas! these shall stand them in no stead; they shall but sink the sooner under the weight of their own numbers (v. 13): *Thy people in the midst of thee are women*; they have no wisdom, no courage; they shall be fickle, feeble, and faint-hearted, as women commonly are in such times of danger and distress; they shall be at their wits' end, adding to their griefs and fears by the power of their own imagination, and utterly unable to do any thing for themselves; the valiant men shall become cowards. *O verſ Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges — Phrygian dames, not Phrygian men.* Though they *make themselves many* (v. 15), as the *canker-worm* and as *the locust*, that come in vast swarms, *though thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven*, though thy exchange be thronged with wealthy traders, who, having so much money to stand up in defence of and so much to lay out in the means of their defence, should, one would think, give the enemy a warm reception, yet their hearts shall fail them too; though they be numerous as caterpillars, yet the fire and sword shall eat them up easily and irresistibly as the canker-worm, v. 15. They are as numerous as those wasting insects, but their enemies shall be mischievous like them. He adds (v. 16), *The canker-worm spoils, or spreads herself, and flies away*. Both the merchants and the enemies were compared to canker-worms. The enemies shall spoil Nineveh, and carry away the spoil, without opposition, or any hope of recovering it. Or the rich merchants, who have come from abroad to settle in Nineveh, and have raised vast estates there, out of which it was hoped they would contribute largely for the defence of the city, when they see the country invaded and the city likely to be besieged, will send away their effects, and remove to some other place, will *spread their wings* and *fly away* where they may be safe, and Nineveh shall be never the better for them. Note, It is rare to find even those that have shared with us in our joys willing to share with us in our griefs too. The canker-worms will continue upon the field while there is any thing to be had, but they are gone when all is gone. Those that men have got by they do not care to lose by. Nineveh's merchants bid her farewell in her distress. Riches themselves are as the canker-worms, which on a sudden *fly away as the eagle towards heaven*, ~~235~~ Proverbs 23:5.

4. Did they put a confidence in the strength of their gates and bars? What fence will those be against the force of the judgments of God? v. 13. *The gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thy enemies*, the gates of thy

rivers (³⁰⁷⁶Nahum 2:6), the flood-gates, or the passes and avenues, by which the enemy would make his entrance into the country, or the gates of the cities; these, though ever so strong and well-guarded, shall not answer their end: *The fire shall devour thy bars*, the bars of thy gates, and then they shall fly open.

5. Did they put a confidence in their king and princes? They should do them no service (v. 17): *Thy crowned heads are as the locusts*; those that had pomp and power, as crowned heads, were enfeebled, and had no power to make resistance, when the enemy came in like a flood. “*Thy captains*, that should lead thy forces into the field, are great indeed, and look great, but they are as the great *grasshoppers*, the *maximum quod sic* — *the largest specimens* of that *species*; still they are but grasshoppers, worthless things, that can do no service. *They encamp in the hedges, in the cold day*, the cold weather, *but, when the sun arises, they flee away*, and are gone, nobody knows whither. So these mercenary soldiers that lay slumbering about Nineveh, when any trouble arises, flee away, and shift for their own safety. *The hireling flees, because he is a hireling.*” The *king of Assyria* is told, and it is a shame he needs to be told it (who might observe it himself), that *his shepherds slumber*; they have no life or spirit to appear for the flock, and are very remiss in the discharge of the duty of their place and the trust reposed in them: *Thy nobles shall dwell in the dust*, and be buried in silence.

6. Did they hope that they should yet recover themselves and rally again? In this also they should be disappointed; for, when the shepherds are smitten, the *sheep are scattered*; the people are dispersed *upon the mountains* and *no man gathers them*, nor will they ever come together of themselves, but will wander endlessly, as scattered sheep do. The judgment they are under is as a wound, and it is incurable; there is no relief for it, “*no healing of thy bruise*, no possibility that the wound, which is so grievous and painful to thee, should be so much as skinned over; thy case is desperate (v. 19) and thy neighbours, instead of lending a hand to help thee, shall *clap their hands over thee*, and triumph in thy fall; and the reason is, because thou hast been one way or other injurious to them all: *Upon whom has not thy wickedness passed continually?* Thou hast been always doing mischief to those about thee; there is none of them but what thou hast abused and insulted; and therefore they shall be so far from pitying thee that they shall be glad to see thee reckoned with.” Note, Those that have been abusive to their neighbours will, one time or another, find it

come home to them; they are but preparing enemies to themselves against their day comes to fall: and those that dare not lay hands on them themselves will *clap their hands over them*, and upbraid them with their former wickedness, for which they are now well enough served and paid in their own coin. *The troublers shall be troubled* will be the burden of many, as it is here *the burden of Nineveh*.