

The Minor Profits

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[0 : 00] But for now, would you open your Bible please to the prophecy of Nahum. Only three little chapters. We may be able to cover all three of them in this morning's setting, but that remains to be seen.

I would remind you that this prophecy is not against Israel. It's not against Judah. It's against Nineveh. And this is the same city that Jonah was sent to prophesy against approximately 200 years before Nahum is prophesying.

And we know that based upon the record that is given in the book of Jonah, the people of Nineveh repented, and God relented from destroying the nation.

It was saved. They simply believed the prophet's message, and the city was spared. But it isn't going to last forever. And apparently, after a few generations have passed, the city reverts to its original sin.

Only this time, when Nahum delivers his prophecy, it is not going to be conditioned upon their repentance. It isn't going to be a warning that they have an opportunity to repent, and if they do, God will forestall the judgment.

[1 : 25] It is simply a pronouncement of coming doom. The city is done for. And there isn't even an invitation to repent that is given. Just a warning that judgment is coming.

And there is a key phrase in the prophecy of Nahum. And it consists of just four words. And when those four words are uttered, and the source from which they have come, you can forget it.

There isn't anything that can be done. And the four words that Nahum utters from the heart and mind of God is, I am against you.

That's it. It's over. Once that is echoed from the Almighty, there is nothing to be done. The fate is sealed, and doom is coming.

So let us begin, if we may, with Nahum, verse 1, chapter 1. The oracle of Nineveh, the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkishite, a jealous and avenging God is the Lord.

[2 : 42] And we've read in other places where the Lord says, vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord. And the reason that is so important is because God is the only one who can bring a thoroughly equitable and just vengeance.

When mankind seeks to extract vengeance upon someone who has offended him, he's often unable to get it right.

The tendency to go too far is always there. When God exacts his vengeance, it is a perfect application of justice.

And we know that justice is dependent and justice is served when the sentence that is pronounced is equal to the crime that has been committed.

This is a great problem that we have with human justice. The tendency is to either give a slap on the wrist when the punishment should be a lot greater, or to send someone away for the rest of their life when the sentence should be a lot shorter.

[3 : 56] So mankind has always had difficulty in executing a fair justice, but God never does. And whatever the Lord deems as just is absolutely perfectly just.

So he is a jealous and avenging God is the Lord. The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserves wrath for his enemies.

The Lord is slow to anger and great in power. And that needs to be kept in mind because God's long-suffering is real and it is subject to being tested and tried.

But when it reaches its limits, that's it. The curtain comes down. The wrath of God falls. We know from biblical examples and we know from present-day examples that God obviously has an enormous capacity for endurance and for long-suffering.

Otherwise, we wouldn't be here. And we just don't know when it is going to run out, but eventually it will. And when it does, why, then there is no returning.

[5 : 19] So the Lord is slow to anger, great in power, and the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.

In whirlwind and storm is his way. And clouds are the dust beneath his feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry.

He dries up all the rivers. Now, what Nahum is doing here is simply recounting and expressing God's power and God's ability over the elements of nature over which man has absolutely no control.

But God does. Excuse me. Boy. I've got this morning voice that I can't seem to shake. So, what he is offering here by way of comparison is that if God is able to so control the elements, the rivers, the seas, etc., think of what he can do with puty man.

And that's the point, the observation that he is making here. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry. He dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither.

[6 : 30] The blossoms of Lebanon wither. Mountains quake because of him. Thank you. Thank you, Larry. I thought the coffee would do that.

Maybe it made it worse. I don't know. Indeed, the earth is upheaved by its presence, the world and all the inhabitants in it.

Who can stand before his indignation? Now, he isn't suggesting that maybe there are some who can. He is simply stating a fact that there is no such person.

Who can stand against his indignation? Well, nobody, really. That's the point that is being made. Who can endure the burning of his anger? Again, rhetorical question demanding a negative answer.

No one. His wrath is poured out like fire and the rocks are broken up by him. In the midst of all of that, the Lord is good. He is a stronghold in the day of trouble and he knows those who take refuge in him.

[7 : 37] But, contrast, with an overflowing flood, he will make a complete end of its sight. What is the it here?

It is Nineveh and it will be principally a flood that will occur affecting, dramatically affecting, the Tigris River, which Nineveh sets on the banks of.

And this river is going to flood and it will actually erode the foundation of the great walls around Nineveh, at least for an expanse of several yards, providing a vast open door for the invading army to walk right in.

And that is exactly what is going to happen to Nineveh. He will make a complete end of its sight and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

Whatever you devise against the Lord, he will make a complete end of it. Distress will not rise up twice, like tangled thorns and like those who are drunken with their drink, they are consumed.

[8 : 52] As stubble, completely withered, from you has gone forth one who plotted evil against the Lord. A wicked counselor, thus says the Lord, though they are at full strength, this is the epitome of Nineveh's grandeur and opulence, though they are at full strength and likewise many, even so, they will be cut off and pass away.

Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no longer. In other words, there has been warnings and warning after warning, but the time for the warnings is over.

The affliction that came that they never heeded, paid no attention to, is ended. I will afflict you no longer. So now, I will break his yoke bar from upon you and I will tear off your shackles.

The Lord has issued a command concerning you. Your name will no longer be perpetuated. I will cut off idol and image from the house of your gods.

I will prepare your grave for you are contemptible. Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace.

[10 : 14] Celebrate your feast, though Judah. Now, I want you to notice here in verse 15 that the scene is changing because he's not talking about Nineveh here. He is talking about Judah.

Celebrate your feast, though Judah. Pay your vows, for never again will the wicked one pass through you. That is, Nineveh and those of the army of Nineveh.

He is cut off completely. And then he goes on to describe the overthrow of Nineveh. And I would be remiss if I did not refer you to the writings of Dr. James Montgomery Boyce.

He is with the Lord now. But he gives a very apt description of the city of Nineveh and it is the likes of which we cannot begin to appreciate. We know something about the scope of great cities when we think of New York and Chicago and L.A.

and how big they are and the square miles that they cover and so on. But I want you to get a picture of Nineveh and they've been able to determine the dimensions thereof because archaeological work has been done there for about the last 150 years.

[11 : 24] There are teams that go in and excavate and have unearthed all kinds of things. So, this is from the pen of Dr. James Montgomery Boyce. He says, one way is by learning something about Nineveh.

So far as secular sources are concerned, the founding of Nineveh lies hidden in the past. But Genesis 10.11 chapter 10 verse 11 assigns the building of the city to Nimrod.

That is the origin of it. Nimrod. The first mighty warrior on the earth. Nimrod was the despot responsible for the first world empire.

Its principalities being Babylon, Erech, Akkad, Kalna, Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ur, and Resen. Of course, Babylon and Nineveh were the two most prominent.

Babylon emerged as the archetypal secular city. Nineveh became the embodiment of human violence and conquest.

[12 : 31] Babylon, here's an important distinction. Babylon stands for the warfare of man against God. Nineveh stands for the warfare of man against his fellow human beings.

Now, I want you to plot this in your mind, if you may, if you can, in a map, because what we are talking about is modern-day Iraq. Nineveh, Nineveh was located in the northern part of Iraq, and the ancient city of Nineveh is only about where the ruins are, that can still be examined today, is about 25 miles north of the modern city of Mosul, M-O-S-U-L, in Iraq.

Babylon is also in Iraq, but it's in the southern part of Iraq, and both of these are on the Tigris-Euphrates river complex, so they benefited from that.

So you've got Nineveh in the extreme north, Babylon in the extreme south, these both represented massive empires, these two, these two were the world superpower in their day, and the city of Nineveh had to have been the largest city that had ever existed in the history of humanity up to this time.

And you just cannot fathom the size of this city, but let's go on here and give you some of this content.

[14 : 13] we've got to got the limit this, but it says the Assyrian monarch may have been checked by God in 701 BC, but these were still great days for Nineveh.

Sennacherib, who was a ruler of his time, more than doubled the city's size, making it the world's largest city for that time. Feature this if you can.

Now, like I said, the archaeologists have been able to go in and unearth a lot of this, so they were able to determine the parameters of it and the dimensions of it.

The inner city was surrounded by a wall, this is the inner city, was surrounded by a wall eight miles in circumference.

It was 100 feet high. Can you imagine the city eight miles in circumference with the wall 100 feet high?

[15 : 23] But wait, and so wide that three chariots could race around it abreast. I can't fathom anything like that.

It had 1200 towers and 14 gates. Beyond this was a much longer outer wall. There was an inner city, an outer city, and what we would call extensive suburbs beyond that.

In Jonah, this wide expanse was termed a three days journey. That's in Jonah 3.3. Remember, it took three days to walk through the city?

Sennacherib's palace was called the palace with no rival. It was of cedar, cypress, and alabaster. Lions of bronze and bulls of white marble guarded it.

Its great hall measured 40 by 150 feet. Sennacherib's army, where he kept his chariots, armor, horses, weapons, and other equipment, covered 46 acres and took six years to build.

[16 : 43] What a magnificent city this was. Yes, but what a wicked city. And with what cruelty and violence was it constructed?

Nineveh grew rich at the expense of the nations she had plundered. In his exhaustive study of Nahum, Dr. Walter Meyer writes, To Nineveh came the distant chieftains who kissed the royal feet.

Rebel leaders paraded in fetters, distant and deceitful kings tied with dog chains and made to live in kennels. To Nineveh were sent gifts of far-off tribute, heads of vanquished enemies, crowned princes as hostages, beautiful princesses as concubines.

In Nineveh, rulers who experienced rare mercy carried brick and mortar for building operations. Their recalcitrant captives were flayed.

We don't know much about flaying, but flaying occurs when you take a knife and you cut a slit in someone's flesh, maybe an eighth of an inch deep, and then you lift up the skin that you have separated with the incision and you begin pulling it, where you literally skin the person alive.

[18 : 19] You take the mass of flesh that can be grasped by the fingers and you just start pulling the skin away from the body. You cannot imagine the agony and the torture that something like that would inflict with those thousands of nerve endings all being pulled and ripped apart.

It would produce a pain so excruciating that you cannot describe it. This is the kind of cruelty that was going on in Nineveh. These people perfected the art of flaying, and they were also the ones who devised the quartering of the human body, whereby each of the four limbs of a person would be tied to four different horses pulling in four different directions, and then the horses spooked, and they began pulling and literally ripping a human being limb from limb.

This kind of cruelty is virtually inconceivable that someone who is a human being could even be capable and willing to inflict that kind of pain upon another human being.

The English did it. Pardon me? The English did it. They draw and quarter. Yeah, well, that's the drawing and quartering, and it's just, it is a brutality that defies description, and yet this is what man is capable of.

And we saw different kinds of things as late as World War II, and the things that the Nazi regime did and that the Japanese did to American prisoners of war and to others.

[20 : 08] That kind of brutality just absolutely escapes us. And you know something? I think this is tied to a lack of appreciation for origins.

And this is a drum that Ken Ham has been beating for years now, and some get it, but most do not. And that is the incredible importance that is assigned to origins.

Because if you understand the concept that there is a good and gracious God who is responsible for mankind and brought forth the first human beings after his image and in his likeness, that assigns a value to humanity that evolution of course cannot provide.

And the nonsensical ideas that some of the philosophies have as to the origin of humanity, apart from creation and the Genesis account, they cannot understand it either. but those who see humanity as having come from the hand of a creator God will undoubtedly place a different value and assign different purposes to humanity than others are able to do.

so there is so much, there is so much that lies in the concept of origins. And not only what I have already said, but it is origins that determines not only value, but destiny and purpose and meaning, meaning, because if we are the result of random chance, there is no meaning.

[22 : 10] There is no purpose. You are just here. And like one of the famous atheists says, it's just a matter of DNA and you just dance to its tune and that's it.

Very impersonal, nothing else, that's it. Well, a whole lot of the way you see humanity and the way you treat your fellow man is linked to the subject of where you think we came from and why we are here.

That is very, very important. And as I've often said, Genesis 1.1, the very beginning, Genesis 1.1, sets the stage because everybody is on one side or the other.

Either it is true or it is not true. And if it is true, that gives value and dignity and purpose and meaning to life. If it isn't true, forget it. Nothing matters.

Nothing matters. And like Dostoevsky said in his brothers Karamazov, if there is no God, all things are permitted. And nobody has the right to say anything in essence is actually wrong.

[23 : 20] So that's where we are. And one wonders if that isn't where these ancient Assyrians were. So let us continue on if we may. The Nineveh against which the prophet thunders divine denunciation had become the concentrated center of evil, the capital of crushing tyranny, the epitome of cruelest torture.

Before the beginning of the seventh century and Sennacherib's reign, other cities had been royal residents, Kala, Asher, Dur-Sherakim, but Sennacherib made Nineveh his capital.

The world metropolis, the source of unmeasured woe for Judah, as for other far greater nations. This great city had existed almost from the beginning of time.

Under Sennacherib, it rose to unparalleled strength and splendor, but it was to end. Within 90 years of Sennacherib's encampment before Jerusalem's walls, Nineveh, the largest city in the world, was overthrown, never to be inhabited again.

And by the way, I think it is extremely significant that here in this ancient area of modern Iraq, Nineveh in the north, and Babylon in the south, this is where virtually everything regarding humanity began.

[24 : 58] We have good reason to suspect at least that the Garden of Eden was somewhere within this vicinity, because we have the flowing of rivers out of the garden, one of which was the Tigris and the Hedekal, and the Pishon and the Gihon rivers, and those rivers kind of geographically pinpoint where these things were, and the Garden of Eden was there.

So what we are saying is that modern day Iraq is really where so much of humanity began, and for certain, it is where the town of Babel was located, where the languages were confounded in Genesis 10 and 11, and men were scattered all over the world then from that time on.

So it is significant that this is where so much began, and as we will see in our prophetic studies later with Zechariah, this is where it's going to end.

And Revelation 17 and 18 describe the destruction of ancient Babylon. So it's going to be something rebuilt, and I want to close on this note because I think it's really significant.

when Saddam Hussein was in power and had reached his peak, he envisioned himself as Nebuchadnezzar II, who of course was the king of Babylon, and they were the ones that invaded Israel and carried them into the 70-year captivity.

[26 : 30] And he was intent on rebuilding the ancient city of Babylon, and interestingly enough, he did succeed in building what was referred to as the Ishtar Gate, I-S-H-T-A-R, the Ishtar Gate.

And the name Ishtar is the name of one of the pagan deities. And Saddam Hussein undertook that enormous building project, but that's as far as he got, was the building of that beautiful gate.

And I have not seen it. I've seen distant pictures of it. But it is available today for tourist attractions, and I am told that it is absolutely stunning.

And it was built according to the blueprint that they had from the original and what they think it looked like. And that, of course, is as far as Saddam Hussein got before he met his untimely end with the invasion, et cetera.

So it's significant, fellas, and we will see as we move on through the minor prophets, because we'll be getting more and more into prophetic material, that that's where it began and that's where it's going to end.

[27 : 42] And that will be close, in the close proximity where the Antichrist will meet his doom.