***Nahum***

Chapter 2

*Nineveh to Fall*

**An attacker advances against you, Nineveh. Guard the fortress, watch the road, brace yourselves, marshal all your strength! 2 The LORD will restore the splendor of Jacob like the splendor of Israel, though destroyers have laid them waste and have ruined their vines. 3 The shields of his soldiers are red; the warriors are clad in scarlet. The metal on the chariots flashes on the day they are made ready; the spears of pine are brandished. 4 The chariots storm through the streets, rushing back and forth through the squares. They look like flaming torches; they dart about like lightning. 5 He summons his picked troops, yet they stumble on their way. They dash to the city wall; the protective shield is put in place. 6 The river gates are thrown open and the palace collapses. 7 It is decreed that the city be exiled and carried away. Its slave girls moan like doves and beat upon their breasts. 8 Nineveh is like a pool, and its water is draining away. “Stop! Stop!” they cry, but no one turns back. 9 Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! The supply is endless, the wealth from all its treasures! 10 She is pillaged, plundered, stripped! Hearts melt, knees give way, bodies tremble, every face grows pale. 11 Where now is the lions’ den, the place where they fed their young, where the lion and lioness went, and the cubs, with nothing to fear? 12 The lion killed enough for his cubs and strangled the prey for his mate, filling his lairs with the kill and his dens with the prey. 13 “I am against you,” declares the LORD Almighty. “I will burn up your chariots in smoke, and the sword will devour your young lions. I will leave you no prey on the earth. The voices of your messengers will no longer be heard.”**

**2:1** *attacker.* Refers to the alliance of the Babylonians, the Medes and the Scythians—particularly the Medes under Cyaxares and the Babylonians under Nabopolassar. (CSB)

*Guard the fortress … marshal all your strength!* Probably irony, touched with sarcasm. *road.* By which the enemies will come. (CSB)

All this detailed description is given to emphasize the futility of these preparations. (Kretzmann)

Proud and mighty Nineveh must prepare to receive some of her own medicine. (TLSB)

**2:2** *restore the splendor of Jacob … Israel.* The whole nation will be restored and united again. (CSB)

The restoration of Israel’s splendor finds its ultimate fulfillment in the NT Church (Ps 145:12; Eph 5:27). (TLSB)

RUINED THEIR VINES – Nineveh had outrageously destroyed the land and been outraging to its inhabitants, so that the Lord felt obliged to avenge this indignity. (Kretzmann)

**2:3** *his soldiers.* Those of the attacker (v. 1), or perhaps those of Nineveh itself. (CSB)

*red.* Either (1) the color of the shields, or (2) a reference to blood on them, or (3) the result of the reflection of the sun shining on them. (CSB)

These things may refer to the war-like preparations made by the Ninevites: they had red shields, and scarlet or purple clothing; their chariots were finely decorated, and proceeded with amazing rapidity. (ACC)

METAL…FLASHES – The chariots, frightful instruments of warfare in Nahum’s time were covered with steel which flashed in the sun. (TLSB)

*brandished.* Ready to use. (CSB)

The wood of cypress trees was both strong and flexible, ideal for lances or spears. (TLSB)

**2:4** *chariots … rushing.* Refers to either (1) the Assyrian war chariots and their unprecedented speed as the Assyrians take frantic but vain steps to defend themselves, or (2) the chariots of Nineveh’s invaders. (CSB)

Those of the besiegers and the besieged, meeting in the streets, producing universal confusion and carnage. (ACC)

**2:5** *He.* Probably the king of Assyria. (CSB)

SUMMONS HIS PICKED TROOPS – Muster up his most renowned warriors and heroes. (ACC)

*city wall.* A moat 150 feet wide had to be filled in before reaching Nineveh’s wall, which was almost 8 miles long with 15 gates. Then battering rams were moved up. (CSB)

*protective shield.* Of the defenders—a framework covered with hides to deflect stones and arrows directed by the invaders at the defenders on the wall. (CSB)

ESV has “siege tower.” This is a Hebrew term and occurs only here in the OT and refers to a movable structure used for shielding those storming the city. (TLSB)

**2:6** *river gates.* Perhaps the dams on the Khoser River, which ran through the city to the Tigris River. They were either already in place, or quickly built, to back up the river water, then suddenly released so the flood would damage the walls. (CSB)

*palace collapses.* One ancient historian (the author of the *Babylonian Chronicles*) speaks of a flood that washed away some of the wall, making it easier for the invaders to enter the city. (CSB)

When this happened its inmates being overcome with terror and losing all semblance of careful thinking and planning. (Kretzmann)

**2:7** BE EXILED – literally, "It is determined," by God; "she is made bare," namely, Nineveh, "like a ravished woman, and carried away." (Kretzmann)

*slave girls.* Possibly temple prostitutes, whose places of business and idols were being destroyed. (CSB)

BEAT…BREASTS – This was like someone beating a drum, these girls beat their chests as an expression of great mourning over the demise of their once mighty city. (TLSB)

**2:8** *like a pool … water is draining away.* Some think that this refers to the Tigris and the smaller rivers encircling and running through parts of the city, and to a system of dams to make the city more impenetrable. Others take the language less literally as a reference to Nineveh’s people fleeing, like water draining from a pool. (CSB)

This once flourishing city now has the look of a drained pond. (TLSB)

STOP! STOP! – Consternation shall be at its utmost height, the people shall flee in all directions; and though quarter is offered, and they are assured of safety it they remain, yet not one looks back. (ACC)

**2:9** The cry of the invaders. (CSB)

Assyrian kings customarily inventoried booty taken from conqueror cities. Nineveh had grown rich through the plunder of its foes, but now it is Nineveh’ turn to be looted. (TLSB)

**2:10** *pillaged, plundered, stripped.* The Hebrew for all three words is similar. The *Babylonian Chronicles* confirms the fact that a great quantity of plunder was carried off by the invaders. (CSB)

*Hearts melt.* The powerful, insolent Ninevites become helpless with fear. (CSB)

Paralyzing fear overcomes the inhabitants of Nineveh. Nahum vividly describes the physiological effects of the reign of terror. (TLSB)

**2:11–13** Nahum ironically contrasts the devastated and desolate city of Nineveh with its former glory and power, expressed in figurative terms. (CSB)

**2:11** *lion and lioness.* Cf. Isa 5:29; Jer 4:7; Hos 5:14; Mic 5:8. The lion is an appropriate image to apply to Assyria because of the rapacious ways of the Assyrian monarchs and because Nineveh contained numerous lion sculptures. (CSB)

The prophet uses this very imagery as a taunt and mocks Nineveh. The one-timepredators has now become the prey. With the vivid comparison, Nahum intends to portray Nineveh’s document brutality as beastly. (TLSB)

**2:12** *filling his lairs … with the prey.* Nineveh was filled with the spoils of war from many conquered nations. (CSB)

This verse gives us a striking picture of the manner in which the Assyrian conquests and depredations were carried on. How many people were spoiled to enrich his whelps—his sons, princes, and nobles! How many women were stripped and slain, whose spoils went to decorate his lionesses—his queen, concubines, and mistresses. And they had even more than they could assume; their holes and dens—treasure-houses, palaces, and wardrobes—were filled with ravin, the riches which they got by the plunder of towns, families, and individuals. This is a very fine allegory, and admirably well supported. (ACC)

**2:13** *I will burn up.* Nineveh’s fall will not be caused by merely natural forces or the superior power of her attackers; it will be an act of God. Nineveh had been put on trial, found guilty and sentenced to destruction. (CSB)

*voices … no longer be heard.* History has confirmed this prediction. (CSB)

As they had boasted of the might and prowess of Assyria and Nineveh. God has ways of subduing even the mightiest enemies, no matter how mightily they rise up in their own conceit. (Kretzmann)