

# Nahum

## Chapter 2

### *The Destruction of Nineveh*

**The scatterer has come up against you. Man the ramparts; watch the road; dress for battle; collect all your strength. 2 For the LORD is restoring the majesty of Jacob as the majesty of Israel, for plunderers have plundered them and ruined their branches. 3 The shield of his mighty men is red; his soldiers are clothed in scarlet. The chariots come with flashing metal on the day he musters them; the cypress spears are brandished. 4 The chariots race madly through the streets; they rush to and fro through the squares; they gleam like torches; they dart like lightning. 5 He remembers his officers; they stumble as they go, they hasten to the wall; the siege tower is set up. 6 The river gates are opened; the palace melts away; 7 its mistress is stripped; she is carried off, her slave girls lamenting, moaning like doves and beating their breasts. 8 Nineveh is like a pool whose waters run away. "Halt! Halt!" they cry, but none turns back. 9 Plunder the silver, plunder the gold! There is no end of the treasure or of the wealth of all precious things. 10 Desolate! Desolation and ruin! Hearts melt and knees tremble; anguish is in all loins; all faces grow pale! 11 Where is the lions' den, the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion and lioness went, where his cubs were, with none to disturb? 12 The lion tore enough for his cubs and strangled prey for his lionesses; he filled his caves with prey and his dens with torn flesh. 13 Behold, I am against you, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will burn your chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions. I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall no longer be heard.**

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

In light of v 13, the disperser of Nineveh's inhabitants is God Himself through the besieging army. *you*. Nineveh personified. (TLSB)

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

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

**2:2** *restoring the majesty 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)

*branches*. God's people are a vineyard whose branches were stripped bare of fruit by ravagers. (TLSB)

**2:3** *his mighty men*. 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)

Colors may be taken literally or may refer to the blood of battle. (TLSB)

*flashing metal* – 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 race madly.* 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)

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

*remembers his officers.* Luther takes this to mean that the Assyrian king summons his officers to confront the enemy (AE 18:301). (TLSB)

*the 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)

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

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)

Water gates holding back the river Khoser, which flowed through Nineveh. The invaders opened the gates, flooding the city and bringing down the palace. (TLSB)

*palace melts away.* 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)

**2:7** *mistress.* Perhaps a reference to the queen of Nineveh. (TLSB)

*stripped.* Nineveh’s inhabitants suffer public humiliation (cf Is 47:1–3, 5). (TLSB)

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

Maids serving their mistress. (TLSB)

*beating their 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 ... whose waters run 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)

**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's turn to be looted. (TLSB)

**2:10** *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...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)

Assyrian kings in their annals and inscriptions often compared themselves to lions, ferocious in battle. The prophet uses this very imagery as a taunt and mocks Nineveh. The one-time predator has now become the prey. With this vivid comparison, Nahum intends to portray Nineveh's documented brutality as beastly. (TLSB)

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

**2:13** *you.* Nineveh. (TLSB)

*LORD of hosts.* The Lord is described as the commander of armies to emphasize the truth that He alone is supreme in heaven and on earth. He acts in history to accomplish His sovereign purposes (Is 1:24). (TLSB)

*I will burn.* 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)

*young lions.* The Assyrian king's subordinates, his officials and troops. (TLSB)

*your messengers.* The Assyrian king Sennacherib sent his messenger to mock Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah (2Ki 18:17–37). Now Nineveh's pompous messengers are silenced for good. (TLSB)

**Ch 2** Nahum mockingly describes the sudden, devastating siege and capture of Nineveh, the city once known for its ruthlessness and cruelty. God will not leave unpunished those whose way of life is violence and force (cf Mt 26:52). God has revealed a different way, one of mercy and peace through His Son, the Prince of Peace. • Lord, guide our feet into the way of peace. Amen. (TLSB)