

# ***Nahum***

## **Chapter 2**

### *Nineveh to Fall*

**An attacker advances against you, Nineveh. Guard the fortress, watch the road, brace yourselves, marshal all your strength! <sup>2</sup> The LORD will restore the splendor of Jacob like the splendor of Israel, though destroyers have laid them waste and have ruined their vines. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> The chariots storm through the streets, rushing back and forth through the squares. They look like flaming torches; they dart about like lightning. <sup>5</sup> He summons his picked troops, yet they stumble on their way. They dash to the city wall; the protective shield is put in place. <sup>6</sup> The river gates are thrown open and the palace collapses. <sup>7</sup> It is decreed that the city be exiled and carried away. Its slave girls moan like doves and beat upon their breasts. <sup>8</sup> Nineveh is like a pool, and its water is draining away. “Stop! Stop!” they cry, but no one turns back. <sup>9</sup> Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! The supply is endless, the wealth from all its treasures! <sup>10</sup> She is pillaged, plundered, stripped! Hearts melt, knees give way, bodies tremble, every face grows pale. <sup>11</sup> 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? <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> “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)

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

*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)

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

**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)

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

**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)

**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)

*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)

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

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

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)

Maids serving their mistress. (TLSB)

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)

**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** *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)

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** *filling his lairs ... with the 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 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)

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

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

*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)

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)

**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)