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# The Goodness and Severity of God

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**VERSE BY VERSE EXPOSITIONS**  
*of*  
**THE BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS**

# **JONAH**

*and*

# **NAHUM**

*By H. P. Mansfield*



## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE BOOK OF JONAH

Assyrian records, in the British Museum, reveal that Shalmanezzer II, a great king and warrior, was contemporary with Jehu, and forced him to pay tribute. He was succeeded by Shamsi-Ramman, of whom but little is known, and he by Ramman-Nirari, another warlike king who followed in the footsteps of Shalmaneser, carrying on many campaigns against Syria, and capturing Damascus, from which he obtained tribute. He was succeeded by another Shalmanezzer, who had great difficulty in maintaining his position against the rising power of Armenia, though he found time for one attack on Syria. He, in turn, was followed by Ashur-dan and Ashur-Nirari, who reigned during a period of internal commotion and distress. This did not permit any leisure for foreign conquest, and with the iron yoke of Assyria removed, at least temporarily, weaker nations rose in power. It could have been, during this period, when the Assyrian monarchy was weakened by revolt, and the country was suffering from plague and famine that the mission of Jonah towards Nineveh was carried out. We do not know for sure, but at such a time as that, both king and people would be more disposed to listen to a man of God, and endeavour to avert imminent ruin by timely, though superficial, repentance. Possibly, too, the preaching of Jonah may have synchronised with the famous eclipse which happened on June 15, B.C. 763, as mentioned in the Assyrian records, and which was regarded as a very evil omen.

The immediate successor of Ashur-Nirari was Pul, or Tiglath Pileser, to whom Menahem, a successor of Jeroboam the son of Joash, paid tribute. The combined facts of disposition and time are thus suggestive, and help to confirm the fact that the Book of Jonah is alike history, parable and prophecy.

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# Foreword

*We have combined a consideration of the work and teaching of Jonah and Nahum under one cover, because both prophets had to do with the one city: mighty Nineveh.*

*Jonah preached repentance to it; and Nahum thundered Divine judgments against it.*

*Both Jonah and Nahum typed the Lord Jesus Christ, though in different relationships. In his mission of mercy to Nineveh, Jonah typed the sacrificial mission of the Lord Jesus at his first advent; but in proclaiming the judgment of Yahweh against the same city, Nahum foreshadowed the work of Christ at his second coming when he shall pour out judgments upon those who reject his mercy.*

*It is significant that in the sequential order of the books of the Bible. Jonah and Nahum are divided by Micah. Micah, in his treatment of Nineveh and Assyria, provides both a key and a bridge that helps to interpret and unite the other two prophecies. He shows that Nineveh and Assyria do not only relate to the past, but that they have a latter-day manifestation, and that the Assyrian of the future will be destroyed by the divine ruler of Israel (Mic. 5:5-6) who would be born in Bethlehem (vv. 1-2), and would be smitten by his people, but who is yet to return to destroy Israel's enemy in the land. In the sign of Jonah there is seen the type of the smitten judge, and in the prophecy of Nahum there is foreshadowed the complete destruction that shall bring the latter-day Russo-Assyrian power to the dust.*

*As Jonah ministered during the reign of Jeroboam II, he lived at approximately the same time (perhaps a little before or after) as Isaiah, Hosea, Amos and Micah. These prophets, however, were of Judah, though the ministry of Amos took him into the northern kingdom where he personally delivered his indictment against Jeroboam the king, and the people of the land. Jonah, therefore, may have been cognisant of the prophecies relating to Israel and Assyria proclaimed by these other prophets of the southern kingdom.*

*Nahum was probably a contemporary of Manasseh, and therefore somewhat later in time.*

*Though these two prophets ministered primarily for their own times and to their own contemporaries, they have both a compelling and interesting message that we do well to heed today.*

*Our verse by verse expositions of these two books are designed for Bible marking. To that end, the notes need to be thoroughly absorbed, analysed and condensed before being transferred to a wide-margin Bible. In our treatment of Zeph-*

*aniah and Haggai (entitled, "Consider Your Ways") we have outlined a system of verse by verse Bible marking which we believe is admirable for this purpose, and is designed to extract the greatest amount of good from Bible study.*

*May the blessing of Yahweh rest upon the reader as he seeks His help in the better understanding of His glorious and character-transforming Word.*

— H. P. MANSFIELD.

*West Beach,  
December, 1967.*

#### **OUR DUTY**

If we do our duty we shall be assisted. This is a matter of promise. If we are attentive to God, He will be attentive to us. 'Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.' The converse is true. Neglect God and He will allow you to fall. There have been many illustrations of this in history. All nations were related in the first instance, to the fountain of Divine knowledge through Noah, but they slighted God, honouring themselves, each other, and their own affairs, like the multitudes of our own day and God departed from them, and gave them over to the reprobateness of mind which is manifest in all the sculptures of antiquity, and the state of man universally. The lesson is that those who neglect or hold loosely what they have, are in danger of being deserted by God, and led into ways that shall be to their hurt.

— J. Thomas.

### THE THREE ISRAELS OF THE BIBLE

*"Thou art My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified"*  
(Isa. 49:3).

The Bible reveals the story of three Israels. The first, of course, is the nation of the Old Testament which was chosen by Yahweh, and called to be His servant. The second Israel (the one specifically referred to by Isaiah in the quotation above) is the Lord Jesus Christ, the ideal Israelite, the suffering servant who undertook to accomplish what the first Israel had failed to do. The third Israel is the Ecclesia, represented in the New Testament as the multitudinous Christ (1 Cor. 12:12), the true Commonwealth of Israel (Eph. 2:12; Rev. 7).

Each, in turn, has been born out of water (1 Cor. 10:1-2; Matt. 3:17; John 3:5—the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord was described by him as his "baptism"—Luke 12:50), brought forth therefrom, that they might reveal the glory of Yahweh to the Ninevites around them (Deut. 28:9-10; John 12:28; Acts 15:14).

It is important to realise, and the Book of Jonah exemplifies, that the Divine call to each has not been to salvation only, but to salvation through God-manifestation; the selection has not been that they might exclusively enjoy their own knowledge of Yahweh, but that they should reveal it unto others. Israel after the flesh "refused to hear" and to heed (Jer. 13:11), and was cut off; and a similar fate awaits those of the Ecclesia who do likewise (Rom. 11:22-23).

The Book of Jonah expressed in graphic, parabolic form, this Divine purpose. Thereby it was clearly set before Israel after the flesh, as it was also subsequently set before Israel after the spirit; and it was manifested in perfection by the ideal Israelite, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we would clearly understand the message of this little book, we must seek for the threefold parable that the experiences of Jonah reveal, as they dramatised before Israel the sign that was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus. In this is found the key to its deeper significance.

The Book therefore has a powerful lesson for all who have embraced Christ. It shows that they, having passed through the waters of baptism, or enacted the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, must, like Jonah, reveal Yahweh unto the Ninevites about them, if they would fulfil the mission of the Divine call to them. A tremendous responsibility rests upon them to fulfil this, for if they fail to do so, the ultimate fate of Nineveh will be theirs. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth," Yahweh said to Israel through the mouth of Amos, "therefore I will punish you" (Amos 3:2).

May the study of the Book of Jonah help to enliven us to our responsibilities towards Yahweh, so that we might reveal to the world about us, the Divine purpose in calling us (Acts 15:14).

# *Jonah's Mission of Mercy*

A Verse by Verse Exposition

*of*

## *The Book of The Prophet Jonah*



*With special reference to*

**THE SIGN AS FORESHADOWING THE DEATH, BURIAL,  
AND RESURRECTION OF THE LORD**

# The Sign of the Prophet Jonah

To some Bible lovers, the book of Jonah is a great embarrassment. It has long been the favourite butt of sceptics who have so mocked at the story of the sea monster swallowing Jonah and later spuing him up on the coast of Syria, that they wish it did not appear in the canon of Scripture. To them, there is nothing more in the book than the rather incredible record of Yahweh punishing a querulous Jew who in his bigoted Judaism refused to perform the Divine bidding to preach to Gentiles, and was, in consequence, disciplined and taught a salutary lesson.

But there is much more in the book than that. In fact, when properly considered, the record of Jonah is a glorious gem that sparkles among the string of pearls that make up the Inspired Library we call the Bible, because of the amazing prophecy and sign it portrays concerning the work of the Lord Jesus. When the true key to the understanding of this book is discovered, it is appreciated why the Lord made constant reference to it, and exhorted his adversaries to consider the significant sign revealed in it. If they had heeded his words, they would have been able to assess his true mission, and may not have crucified their Messiah.

Jonah was not a bigoted, petulant Jew, dominated by a narrow, unscriptural Judaism, but a high-minded prophet in the true sense of the word. Like the Lord Jesus whom he typed, he was prepared to sacrifice himself for his people, and in doing so, brought salvation to both those Jews and Gentiles who heed his message.

## Jonah's Significant Name.

Jonah, or *Yonah*, is the Hebrew word for "dove" or "pigeon." The dove, or pigeon, was the only bird offered in sacrifice under the law (Lev. 1:14). It was the offering of poverty for a sin-offering, or a burnt-offering, and also was offered with a lamb at childbirth (Lev. 12:6—in case of poverty, two birds were offered instead of a lamb, as was done in the case of the birth of Jesus—Lev. 12:8; Luke 2:24). The dove was also used in the ritual for cleansing a leper (Lev. 14:3, 22).

Though the dove was a "clean" bird, it is said that Jews never ate it because of its unique character in sacrificial offering.

The dove was used by the Lord as a symbol of harmlessness (Matt. 10:16), and when offered in sacrifice, it emphasised the principle of innocence, or perfection of character. Thus it was a fitting representation of the Lord Jesus. Like the sheep,



or lamb (of which it was the equivalent among bird life) it not only represented innocence and harmlessness, but was also noted for foolishness when acting in moments of panic (Hos. 7:11; Isa. 53:6). In the Song of Solomon, the multitudinous Bride of Christ is likened to a Dove (Song 1:15; 2:14; 4:1, etc.).

The name Jonah (Dove) was therefore a significant one to Jews, as is also to Gentiles, for it is the common symbol for peace to both these great families of the human race.

### **Jonah was the Symbol of Israel.**

As, among animals, the lamb or sheep was used to represent Israel, so, among birds, the dove (*yonah*) was used for the same purpose (Isa. 60:8; Hos. 7:11; 11:11). The Psalmist, pleading for Israel, declared: "O deliver not the soul of Thy turtledove unto the multitude of the wicked; forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever" (Ps. 74:19). Using the same symbol, but speaking of the future glory of the nation, he said: "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold" (Ps. 68:13). In these terms he portrayed Israel, as Yahweh's dove, elevated from the degradation of the pots, and made resplendent with silver and gold: the silver of redemption (Exod. 30:13), and the gold of a tried faith (1 Pet. 1:7).

The dove was a significant symbol to apply to Israel. It should have directed the minds of true Israelites back to the dramatic salvation of Noah in the time of the Flood. After an appropriate interval, he sent forth a dove from the Ark of salvation, but, as Genesis 8:9 reports:

**"The dove (*yonah*) found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him (Noah) into the ark."**

The dove was helpless outside the ark. It fluttered panic-stricken and frantic over the waste of stormy waters, finding "no rest for the sole of her foot." Only in its shelter did it feel safe. How true this is of Israel, of whom the dove is a symbol! During the centuries of her dispersion, Israel, having left the Ark of Refuge, has been like the dove, fluttering fearfully and afraid, over the stormy waters of the Gentile sea of nations (Isa. 57:20). There has been no true rest for her, and never will be, until she returns to the man called Rest (Noah), and shelters in the Ark he can provide.

As the dove was used as a symbol of Israel, so the mission upon which Jonah (the Dove) was sent, illustrated the purpose that Yahweh had with His people.

**1. Yahweh designed that Israel should become the medium of His glory and grace unto all nations (Deut. 28:9-10; Jer. 13:11). He required the same of Jonah, instructing him to preach repentance to the Ninevites.**

**2. When Israel failed to accomplish Yahweh's purpose, He per-**

mitted the nation to be “swallowed up” of the Gentiles (Jer. 51:34; Hos. 8:8)—as Jonah was swallowed by the fish.

3. To accomplish His purpose, however, Yahweh has preserved Israel, and will yet bring her forth by a political resurrection from her national grave. She will be spued up out of the stormy waters of Gentile politics — as Jonah was from the belly of the fish.

4. After this political resurrection, Israel will prove a blessing to the Gentiles (Zech. 8:13) — as Jonah proved to the Ninevites.

Israel failed to manifest the trusting, innocent virtue of the Dove, its symbol. Hosea likened Ephraim to a “silly dove without heart,” fluttering panic-stricken from one nation to another for help, and ignoring the Power that could save it.

But Yahweh from the beginning had determined to reveal unto men His ideal Israel, His true dove, in a Man who would manifest to perfection those divine attributes that Israel failed to reveal. That Man is the Lord Jesus Christ, called Israel by the Spirit speaking through the prophet Isaiah:

“Yahweh hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my name . . . and said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified” (Isa. 49:1-6).

The Lord Jesus is called “Israel” because he is the ideal Israelite, the true *Prince with El* as the word signifies. He revealed all the Divine virtues of Yahweh which had been set before Israel as their ideal. He is the true Lamb of God, the innocent and trusting Dove. And this was brought home clearly to the people of Israel when he presented himself before John for baptism. John proclaimed that his mission was to prepare the way for the manifestation of the Messiah. He declared that in the midst of Israel, at that very time, was one mightier than he, the latchet of whose shoes he was unworthy to unloose (Luke 3:16). In Jesus that one was revealed. He presented himself to John for baptism, having no sins to confess, and when the rite had been completed, his real identity was revealed by a Voice from heaven. Luke records:

“It came to pass, that Jesus also being baptised, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a Voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased” (Luke 3:21).

The Holy Spirit “descended in the form of a dove.” Why a dove? Because this was the symbol of Israel, and in the Lord there was to be witnessed the personification of the true Israel. But the word “dove” is *yonah* in Hebrew, so that the startled onlookers saw the Holy Spirit descend and settle on the Lord Jesus in the “form of a Yonah.” Thus, as the spirit of Elijah had descended on Elisha, so the spirit of Jonah the prophet descended on the Lord Jesus. If the people of Judea had been spiritually alive to the significance of the sign of the prophet Jonah, they would have realised that the Lord was the antitype of the prophet, about to fulfil the allegorical significance of his

mission.

What did Jonah do that prefigured the mission of the Lord Jesus? He gave himself in sacrificial death; he was figuratively raised from the grave; he preached repentance unto Gentiles. The Lord Jesus, either personally, or through his disciples, fulfilled the type.

### BIBLE TYPES AND PARABLES

A parable is a setting forth of a certain thing as a representative of something else. Hence it is comparison or similitude. It may be spoken or acted. In the former case fiction is used to illustrate that which is real; while in the latter real actions on a smaller scale are representative of remoter and grander events. Whether spoken or acted, parables are dark and unintelligible to those who are not skilled in the things of the kingdom; but when once they come to comprehend these, the things they resemble immediately appear. To allegorize is to represent truth by comparison. For certain features of the kingdom of God to be illustrated parabolically is to speak, or act, allegorically; and is a mode of instruction more calculated to keep up the attention, and to impress the mind permanently, than a set discourse, or formal disquisition. The scriptures are constructed after this ingenious plan, by which they are made so much more interesting, and capable of containing so much more matter, than any other book on the same subject, and of the same size. The proof of this is contained in such passages as 1 Cor. 10:6: "These things were our examples (*typoi*, types) to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted . . ."

— J. Thomas, *Elpis Israel*.

# *The Book of Jonah: Both History and Allegory*

## **Biography Of The Prophet**

Jonah lived, according to Bible chronology, in the early half of the eighth century before Christ, and prophesied in the time of Jeroboam II of Israel. His home town was Gath-hepher, an obscure village about 3 miles north-east of Nazareth, where Jesus was brought up.

The brief account of his ministry (see 2 Kings 14:25-27) implies that when Israel was in dire extremity, Jonah arose with a message of encouragement, stimulating the people with the promise of help from Yahweh. The record states:

**“He (Jeroboam II) restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of Arabah, according to the word of Yahweh, the God of Israel, which He spoke by His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher. For Yahweh saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter, that they were straightened, and in want, and destitute, nor was there any helper for Israel. But Yahweh had not said that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, so He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam, the son of Joash” (2 Kings 14:25-27 — A.V. and LXX).**

This biographical sketch, scanty though it is, is sufficient to create some picture of the times, and of the work of Jonah. It also provides a key for the better understanding of the book that bears his name.

The northern kingdom of Israel had been brought low because of apostasy, but due to the earnest pleading of the prophet Jonah, a respite was granted by Yahweh, and he was sent back to the people with a promise of Divine help.

As a result, a period of greater prosperity was enjoyed by Israel. Under Jeroboam, the borders of the nation were extended in all directions, and the kingdom rose to a peak of glory and power exceeding anything before or since. For a time, the northern kingdom of Israel, became an object of fear and envy on the part of its neighbors.

But Jonah, as the prophet of Yahweh, was not blind to the real spiritual state of the people. He knew, as all men of God know, that Yahweh will not forever bear with continued wickedness, but that He will vindicate His holy Name by punishing those who are guilty of it. The prophets, Isaiah, Hosea and Amos, who also prophesied about this time, spoke in scathing language of the wickedness of the northern kingdom, and foretold impending disaster when Assyria would arise, as the rod of Yahweh, to smite the people. These prophets of God knew that the seeming prosperity and strength of Israel was but an

illusion, and that the nation existed on sufferance. Unless true reformation was effected in Israel, Divine retribution would come swift and final through the medium of the brutal Assyrian power in the north.

Jonah, the prophet who had helped elevate Israel so much was not ignorant of this threat. The question was, did sufficient time remain to bring about a complete reformation in Israel, and to ensure her continuance as a nation?

### **Jonah's Reluctance To Preach**

About this time, there came the message to Jonah that Nineveh would be destroyed within forty days if the people did not repent, and the prophet was commissioned to go to this city, and warn the people of this Divine decree.

Jonah realised that a repentant, strengthened Nineveh was the greatest danger to Israel, and the reform he hoped to implement. He knew that the currently extended borders of Israel, and the apparent military strength and skill of Jeroboam in war, did not reflect the true state of the nation, but had developed out of the current political and military decline of Assyria, which had been brought low because of the gross wickedness of its people. If Nineveh repented, however, it would recover from the temporary recession, with dire consequences to Israel. Jonah realised this, and understood from the message he had received from Yahweh, that forty days constituted the time limit either way. If Nineveh did not repent within that time, it would be completely overthrown, and Israel would be saved from an enemy that would overwhelm it, as his fellow-prophets in the southern kingdom had predicted. If Nineveh were destroyed, however, further time would be gained for the prophet to more thoroughly implement the reformation he had commenced in the nation.

It appears that Jonah's action in avoiding the Divine commission was dictated by these considerations. He decided to go to Tarshish rather than to Nineveh, believing that by so doing he would help to save his people from the destruction that would come from a revived Nineveh.

Jonah was prepared to sacrifice himself to save his people. He knew that in avoiding the mission he had been set, he would cut himself off from the Most High, and jeopardise his own eternal future. He was prepared to become a curse for his people, if it would help to redeem them from the curse that would inevitably come upon them if they did not reform, and in this he became a type of Christ who "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13).

Even on the storm-tossed ship, when he realised that the

hand of Yahweh was in the fury of wind and wave that engulfed the ship, he still sought death rather than help an enemy who would ultimately destroy his people. Thus he pleaded with the mariners to throw him overboard.

Then followed the dramatic intervention by Yahweh, by which was typified the death and resurrection of the Lord; and afterwards the preaching of repentance to the Gentiles, which, in the antitype was carried out by the Lord's servants, the Apostles.

In all his actions, Jonah was moved by the highest motives of good. The future of the people he loved became his main concern. He was like Paul who declared: "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3). Or like Moses who also typed the Lord Jesus, and who, at the risk of his own life, stood between Yahweh and the people, saying: "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin . . . ; and if not, blot me I pray thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written" (Exod. 32:32). Jonah's motives will be more clearly revealed, as we consider the book that bears his name, verse by verse. They are summarised in his statement contained in Chapter 4:2:

**"O Yahweh, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil."**

To preach to Nineveh might lead to the preservation of a city that in Jonah's eyes was better destroyed, for it would only destroy his people. In this, Jonah may have been shortsighted, but he was not faithless, nor was he out of sympathy with preaching to Gentiles. His great motive, was to preserve his own people, whom he loved so dearly that he was prepared to give his own life, that they might have time to repent and be saved.

### **BEHOLD THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD**

Jesus Christ is God manifest in flesh. Some try to imitate his kindness while forgetting his zeal. Others copy his severity while failing to remember his gentleness. Others extol his placability and charity whilst overlooking his righteousness and jealousy of the Father's honor. A balanced view of his character brings both goodness and severity into correct focus.

# Analysis

Once we have lifted the book of Jonah from out of the battle-ground of destructive criticism, and have discerned the remarkable foreshadowing of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ presented therein, the experience of the prophet becomes a most exciting adventure in Bible exposition.

“The sign of the prophet Jonah” (Matt. 12:39) prefigured the work of Christ. Jonah sacrificed himself for his people, experienced a typical death and resurrection, and afterwards preached repentance to the Gentiles.

“Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites” (Luke 11:30), as Christ was to his generation. Jonah preached that unless Nineveh repented, it would fall within forty days. Christ did likewise to his generation (Matt. 24:34-35), and within forty prophetic “days” of years, Jerusalem fell before the onslaught of the Roman hordes. If the Lord’s contemporaries had heeded the sign, it would have taught them certain facts concerning the death and resurrection of the Messiah. They would have also learned that the time for reformation was limited, after which repentance would be preached to the Gentiles. They saw the sign at the Lord’s baptism (Matt. 3:16), and should have comprehended and heeded it as did Paul later. Paul taught that Christ “died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). What Old Testament Scriptures taught that Christ would be buried, and rise again the third day? The answer is found in the book of Jonah, if one comprehends the sign presented therein.

The book should be studied, therefore, from the standpoint of history and typical prophecy.

It is conveniently divided into four chapters, and headings for these sections, when considered from the standpoint of Jonah’s experiences, are as follows: Chapter 1—EVASION; Chapter 2—PRESERVATION; Chapter 3—PROCLAMATION; Chapter 4—EDUCATION.

If the same chapters are considered from the Divine standpoint, the following headings epitomise the subjects: Chapter 1—THE STORM; Chapter 2—THE FISH; Chapter 3—THE CITY; Chapter 4—YAHWEH.

We have set these out, together with sub-headings, providing an outline of each section. We suggest that if the Book of Jonah is read, with this epitome before the reader, he will instantly obtain a better grasp of the book.

## THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAH

### CHAPTER 1 — EVASION (THE STORM)

Jonah Flees To Evade His Mission	vv. 1-3
The Storm	vv. 4-5
The Confession	vv. 6-9
The Sacrifice and Conversion	vv. 10-16

### CHAPTER 2 — PRESERVATION (THE FISH)

The Fish	Ch. 1:17-2:1
Jonah's Psalm of Thanksgiving	vv. 2-9
Jonah's Deliverance	v. 10

### CHAPTER 3 — PROCLAMATION (THE CITY)

Jonah Pays His Vows	vv. 1-4
The Ninevites Repent	vv. 5-9
Yahweh's Mercy	v. 10

### CHAPTER 4 — EDUCATION (YAHWEH'S REPROOF)

Jonah's Displeasure	vv. 1-3
Yahweh's Reproof	vv. 4-11

*In our exposition we have provided the text of Rotherham's translation in order that the reader may compare this with the Authorised Version.*

### JONAH'S ERRAND OF MERCY

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrian Empire was a World-Empire for about 300 years, 900-607 B.C. It began its rise to world power about the time of the division of the Hebrew Kingdom at the close of Solomon's reign. It gradually absorbed and destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Assyrian kings who had to do with Israel and Judah were:

Shalmanezar II, 860-825 B.C. Began to "cut off Israel."	
Ashur-dan 808 -	} Period of Decline (Jonah's visit?)
Ashur-Nirari 746 -	
Tiglath-Pileser III, 747-727. Deported most of Israel.	
Shalmanezar IV, 727-722. Besieged Samaria.	
Sargon II, 722-705. Carried rest of Israel captive (Isaiah).	
Sennacherib, 705-681. Invaded Judah (Isaiah).	
Esar-haddon, 681-668. Very powerful.	
Assur-banipal, 668-626. Most powerful and brutal <i>Nahum</i> (?).	
The brutal empire fell, 607 B.C.	

Thus Jonah was called of God to prolong the life of the enemy nation which was already in the process of exterminating his own nation. Jonah was a statesman, as well as prophet, the most famous man, next to the king, in his nation (2 Kings 14:25).

— Bible Handbook (Amended).



# CHAPTER 1

## *Evasion (The Storm)*

*Interrupted in his ministrations to Israel, by a commission received from Yahweh instructing him to go to Nineveh and warn the people that unless they repented of their evil deeds within forty days, the city would be destroyed, Jonah sought to evade doing so. He recognised that the political revival of Assyria was only possible at the expense of Israel. And, to him, there was no purpose in saving such a brutal, anti-semitic city from its just judgment. He therefore attempted to evade the commission. He took ship to Tarshish, hoping by so doing, to so delay the preaching of repentance to the Ninevites as to ensure the destruction of the city. But Yahweh's work of grace cannot be thwarted by man. The ship was involved in a tremendous storm that threatened to destroy both it, and those in it. The panic-stricken sailors sought the help of their gods, but in vain. The mysterious passenger was brought up from his cabin and interrogated. They learned with greater fear that he was a worshipper of Yahweh, and hesitated to cast a worshipper of such a powerful God overboard as he bid them do. They strove to reach a haven by their own means, but the storm, increasing in tempo, threatened to engulf them all. At last, having sought the forgiveness of Yahweh, they cast the prophet into the raging waters. A calm ensued. The men recognised this as the hand of God, and vowed to serve Him in truth.*

*There is a moral lesson to be learnt from the experience of Jonah. It is that men cannot successfully evade the duties and responsibilities that Yahweh imposes upon them. They may attempt to do so for a variety of reasons. They may become disgruntled at circumstances that arise; they may be discouraged by reverses they experience; they may be weakened through lack of faith. These and other considerations may interpose between them and their duty, may influence them to turn from its path. If they allow this to happen, they act in a very shortsighted way; more shortsighted, in fact, than Jonah, who fled to Tarshish not through lack of faith, or personal pique, but because of lack of understanding of Yahweh's purpose. Let us search the Bible that we may understand God's purpose better, and by elevation of our minds, seek that communion with Yahweh that will strengthen us to surmount every problem and difficulty that might hinder us in our pilgrimage towards the Kingdom of God.*

# PROPHECY OF JONAH

## CHAPTER 1

1. And the word of Yahweh came unto Jonah son of Amittai, saying:
2. Arise, get thee to Nineveh the great city, and proclaim unto it, That their wickedness hath come up before Me.
3. But Jonah arose to flee unto Tarshish, away from the presence of Yahweh, and went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish, so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of Yahweh.

### The Prophet's Divine Commission And Flight — Vv. 1-3

*Jonah seeks to evade the instructions given him by fleeing far to Tarshish in the west.*

### VERSE 1

**"Now the word of Yahweh"**—The book commences abruptly with this challenging statement. And it is challenging. The word of Yahweh must not be confused with that of man. It does not brook interference or contradiction. It issues forth as an imperial mandate with power to accomplish that which it proclaims (Isa. 55:11). It can perform miracles, for it can transform the hearts of men (Col. 3:10). Yahweh has magnified it above all His name, and therefore it should be heeded in all its teaching (Ps. 138:2). A similar phrase as this occurs seven times in the book of Jonah as though as to emphasise the literal truth of the record, and the folly of man in opposing that which Yahweh decrees — (Ch. 1:1; 2:10; 3:1; 3:3; 4:4, 9, 10). Seven is the number of completion, and in this seven-fold declaration, the will of Yahweh was expressed.

**"Jonah the son of Amittai"**—Amittai is the secondary form of *ameth*, the Hebrew word for "truth". Jonah, son of Amittai thus signifies, "Dove, son of Truth." In such a statement as that, the conjunction governs the noun. For example, "son of iniquity" describes one filled with iniquity; "son of belial" is one filled with worthlessness; "son of God" is one filled with the influence of God. "Jonah the son of Amittai" therefore signifies "the Dove who is filled with Truth." As such he was a fitting type of

the Lord Jesus upon whom the Spirit descended in the form of a dove (or Jonah), and who declared to his disciples: "I will send unto you the Spirit of truth which shall guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). Jonah's name stood as a fitting caption for his ministry. He appeared before Israel as the Dove filled with Truth, exhorting the people to seek the Divine strength that alone could reproduce dovelike qualities in them.

### VERSE 2

**"Cry against Nineveh"** — The word "cry" signifies a harsh, peremptory proclamation. It was no gentle preaching, no sermonising in the terms of modern pulpit orations that Jonah was to use, but a loud, harsh proclamation such as the urgency of the situation demanded. He was to bring clearly home to the people a sense of their wickedness, and warn them of the disaster that would surely overtake them if they failed to heed his message. There was no time for parleying, no time for the use of diplomacy or finesse in approach. He was to proclaim an ultimatum in the name of Yahweh. Repentance or destruction was the decree issued against the guilty city. A similar approach to preaching is necessary today, for a crisis threatens the modern world as imminent and as urgent as that which faced Nineveh in the days of the prophet, but the people are unheeding of it. The only method that will gain results is that commanded by Yahweh, and eventually used by Jonah.

### VERSE 3

**"But Jonah rose up to flee"**—He did so because he preferred

## PROPHECY OF JONAH

4. But Yahweh hurled a great wind against the sea, and there arose a mighty tempest in the sea, — and the ship thought to be broken in pieces,

the destruction of Nineveh to its preservation. He explained this later (Ch. 4:2), and we will reserve our consideration of the prophet's motives until we hear them from his lips!

**"Unto Tarshish"**—As he left from Joppa, the ship upon which he sailed must have proceeded west. Tarshish was the extremity of the West, and as the Phoenician sailors at that time plied as far west as Gibraltar and Britain, the identification of Tarshish with those places appears well established. It is not important to the understanding of the book to discuss the identity of Tarshish, for Jonah never arrived there. The identity of this country is discussed in *Prophecies Of The Restoration*, pp 76, 77.

**"From the presence of Yahweh"**—This does not mean that Jonah imagined that he could literally escape from Yahweh's influence, as though He is limited in the scope of His power; it suggests the unique status that the land of Israel enjoys in the consideration of God. The term, to go from the "presence of Yahweh," is Scripturally used in the sense of leaving that centre where His worship is established (Gen. 4:14-16), and as, in the days of the prophet, this was limited to Israel, it meant to flee from that land. Israel is described as a land "which Yahweh careth for: the eyes of Yahweh are always upon it" (Deut. 11:12). To depart from that land, as the prophet did, was to depart from the "inheritance of Yahweh" as David told Saul (1 Sam. 26:19-20), or to be "cast out of His presence" as Jeremiah warned the Jews (Jer. 23:39). Yahweh's presence in the earth was signified by the Shekinah glory in the Most Holy in Jerusalem, so that His "presence" in the earth was then limited to the land of Israel. After the crucifixion of the Lord, the "presence of Yahweh" became

more widely diffused, as Christ taught it would (John 4:23), for the token of His presence then became the people "taken out of the Gentiles" for "His name" (Acts 15:14).

Jonah never imagined for a moment, that having reached Tarshish, he would be beyond the power of Yahweh to discipline him, for such men of faith as he, recognised the omnipresence of Deity (Ps. 139:9-10), and realised that there is no escaping that Power. However, Jonah hoped that by sailing to far-off Tarshish the preaching to Nineveh would be sufficiently delayed, that the time limit imposed by Yahweh would lapse.

**"He found a ship"**—The Hebrew word for "ship" is *oniyyah* which signifies any large vessel. However, in v. 5 the word for "ship" is *sephimar*, and comes from a root, *saphan*, meaning "to cover." *Sephimar* signifies a "covered" or "decked" ship. Jonah's ship, therefore, must have been one of considerable size. The Phoenicians had perfected sailing more than any other nation, and had constructed vessels capable of sailing the Mediterranean and beyond. These ships were of considerable size, and were decked, but in addition to using sails, had also tiers of oarsmen, whose long-handled oars extended from the sides of the ship. The crew on such a ship could number upwards of 200 men or more. Jonah "paid the fare" as a passenger, and immediately went to his cabin below, to rest.

### The Storm — Vv. 4-5

*The journey commenced in calm conditions, but these suddenly changed into a raging inferno, as a most terrible storm broke over the ship.*

### VERSE 4

**"But Yahweh sent out a great wind"**—The margin gives the lit-

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5. Then were the mariners afraid, and made outcry every man unto his own god, and they hurled the wares which were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them,—but Jonah had gone down into the hinder parts of the vessel, and had lain down and fallen into a sound sleep.
6. Then drew near unto him the shipmaster, and said to him, What meanest thou, O sound sleeper? Arise, cry unto thy God! Peradventure God will bethink himself of us, that we perish not.
7. And they said—every one unto his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may get to know for whose sake this calamity is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

eral Hebrew as “cast forth.” This is rendered in the RSV as “hurled forth,” and suggests the sudden and unexpected violence of wind and wave that arose against the ship.

**“The ship was like to be broken”**

—The Hebrew (see margin) signifies, “was thought to be broken.” The ship was surrounded by such a growing crescendo of fury from the elements as Yahweh “hurled forth” His storm, that the thoughts of the sailors were that the ship would be broken by the violence of the waves. Thus fear swept the seemingly doomed ship.

### VERSE 5

**“The mariners”**—The Hebrew word literally signifies “the salts”—an expressive title for those who gain their livelihood from the sea.

**“Cried every man unto his god”**

—Fear drove them to religion, but it was a religion without power.

**“Cast forth the wares”**—The word in the Hebrew is *Keli* and signifies an implement, or something prepared for use. In this context it most likely related to “the tackling.” The gods of the heathen having been appealed to in vain, the sailors must depend upon their own skill in seamanship.

**“Jonah was fast asleep”**—Jonah was tired out, so much so, that like the Lord in the ship on the stormy waters of Galilee, he did not awake. What had tired Jonah? Perhaps the fretting anxiety of the commission given him, and the worry associated with trying to avoid that which Yahweh had commanded him to do. There is nothing more calculated to tire

us out than striving against our Maker!

### The Confession—Vv. 6-9

*Jonah was awakened out of his sleep, and interrogated by the fear-stricken sailors. They learned that he was a worshipper of Yahweh, and in evading the commission delivered him, was responsible for the storm that threatened to destroy them all.*

### VERSE 6

**“The shipmaster”**—Literally, this is “the chief of the rope,” an expressive sea-faring term to describe the captain.

**“What meanest thou, O sleeper”**

—The captain was irritated by his mysterious passenger. He could make nothing of him! How was it possible that he could sleep through such a storm as they were experiencing! It was time for action, and he, like the others, should assist by beseeching his God for help and protection.

**“Call upon thy God”**—They recognised that the pleas to their gods had been completely ineffectual.

**“If so be that God will think upon us”**—The Hebrew has the definite article here, *ha Elohim*, the God, as if they were searching among all gods for the supreme Deity. The fear of the storm had not merely driven them to religion, but had instilled in them a desire to seek the true God that He might help.

### VERSE 7

**“Come, and let us cast lots”**—In spite of all their religious exercises, the storm raged unabated

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8. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose sake this calamity is upon us? What is thy business? and from whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?
9. And he said unto them, A Hebrew am I, and Yahweh the God of the heavens do I revere, him who made the sea, and the dry land.

in all its violence. This caused the crew to come to the conviction that it was sent by God in punishment of some crime committed by one of them on board. They therefore proceeded to cast lots to ascertain the guilty party.

### VERSE 8

**“For whose cause is this evil upon us?”** — The crew having found the culprit, proceeded to investigate his guilt. The scene is a dramatic one: the storm-tossed ship, the howling gale, the lowering sky, the angry waves reaching up as though to snatch their victims and plunge them into their depths, whilst on board the panic-stricken crew gathered around the prophet subjecting him to a close interrogation.

### VERSE 9

**“I am an Hebrew”**—This name clearly discriminates between true Israelites and Gentiles, and establishes the line of demarcation between the two classes. The word signifies “a crosser over,” and it was first applied to Abram when he crossed over the Euphrates to enter the land of promise (Gen. 14:13). He was then a “crosser over.” He had crossed over from a way of life that led inevitably to death, to one that led to life. All who embrace Christ thus become Hebrews in the true sense of the word. In Egypt, the women who defied the decree of Pharaoh in order to preserve the nation of Israel are significantly described as Hebrews (Exod. 1:16). On the deck of the storm-tossed ship, the statement, “I am an Hebrew” was a challenging one. It separated Jonah from the rest of the ship’s company with their multiplicity of gods, so that on that disabled ship, driven helplessly before wind and wave, the clear line of demarcation was drawn between Israelite

and Gentile, as Jonah made his confession: “I am a Hebrew, one who has crossed over, a man apart.”

**“I fear Yahweh”**—This statement made even sharper the line of demarcation between Jonah and the Gentile crew. Yahweh is the covenant name of the God of the Hebrews, by which He is pleased to be known by all true Israelites (Psalm 68:4; Malachi 3:16). It is the Name proclaimed by the Elohim to Moses, when Yahweh announced His intention to manifest Himself in a people of His choice. The Name is compounded of the Hebrew verb, *ehyeh*, signifying “I will be.” This verb occurs in the statement of Exodus 3:12: “Surely I will be with thee.” Yahweh, therefore, signifies “He Who will be,” and is a Name that is prophetic of the Divine purpose to manifest the Divine glory in the earth for all flesh to see (Isa. 40:5). It is the Divine memorial Name as Moses was told. “This is my Name for ever, and this is My memorial for a generation of the race” (J. Thomas translation—Exod. 3:15). Hence Isaiah declared: “The desire of our soul is to Thy memorial name” (Isa. 26:8). It is to this Name that the Lord Jesus made reference when he taught his disciples to pray: “Hallowed be Thy name.” Thus he declared: “I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world” (John 17:6), “And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (v. 26). Jesus manifested the Name because he revealed the glory of the Father for all to see. John wrote: “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). He declared the Name

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in that he taught the principles of it unto the disciples. Later, those same disciples, set this forth as a fundamental of faith, declaring that "God had visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). Those who claim to be the people "of the Name" should show an interest in what that Name is, and what it represents and promises.

Originally, Israel as a nation was selected as the people "of the name," but they failed to reveal its attributes, for such a people should live to the glory of the Father, glorifying Him before all. The Spirit through Isaiah declared, "every one that is called by My name... I have created for My glory" (Isa. 43:7). However, in superstitious dread of the power of the name, Jews have refused to pronounce it, imagining that this negative attitude will preserve them from the dread sin of "taking the Name in vain." But their very attitude has "profaned" this holy name (Ezek. 36:22), for to profane it is to act in such a way as to disgrace it (Isa. 52:5; Lev. 18:21; Amos 2:7; Prov. 30:9), and this the Jewish people have done.

Concerning the pronunciation of the Name, Unger's Bible Dictionary comments: "The Hebrew tetragrammation (YHWH) traditionally pronounced Jehovah is now known to be correctly vocalised *Yahweh*. New inscriptional evidence from the second and first millennia B.C. point toward this fact.... (This) has commended itself in the light of the phonetic development and grammatical evidence of increased knowledge of Northwest Semitic and kindred tongues.... The name *Yahweh* has been found to be unique to Israel and has not been verified as the name of any deity outside Israel."

In the A.V. the Name has been translated as Lord or God printed in small capitals (e.g. Ezekiel 38:1, 3 cp. with Ezek. 37:27, 38:3), or as Jah (Ps. 68:4) and Jehovah (Exod. 6:3). Why has the true Name been thus avoided? The

answer is given in the preface to the Revised Standard Version, and is significant in view of Jonah's statement on the deck of the storm-tossed ship. The RSV declares: "The use of any proper name for the one and only God (i.e. Yahweh), as though there were other gods from whom He had to be distinguished... is entirely inappropriate for the universal faith of the Christian Church" (p.ix). Thus, because the RSV knows only "one universal Christian Church," which, in fact, rejects the God of the Hebrews in favor of the Trinity, the Name Yahweh is suppressed!! True Hebrews, true "crossers over," will repudiate the claims of the so-called "universal church" of an apostate Christendom, and will stand aside from it as completely as did Jonah from the crew of heathens that were calling on their gods to save them.

A curious feature emerges when the Name of Yahweh is considered, and that is, that whenever it is mentioned in the presence of those who do not see the need to stand aside from the world, it creates resentment. It did so the first time it was used in the presence of such. When Moses appeared before Pharaoh, he declared: "Thus saith Yahweh God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness." Pharaoh's reply was: "Who is Yahweh, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not Yahweh, neither will I let Israel go" (Exod. 5:1-2). Pharaoh's attitude and words expressed the attitude of all Egypt towards the Name, and will be avoided by all those who respect the fact that in the Lord Jesus Christ, God "did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name." As such, they will despise not the Name (Mal. 1:6), but will extol (Ps. 68:4), remember (Ps. 20:7), revere (Ps. 86:11), praise (Ps. 113:1-3), love (Ps. 119:132), bless (Ps. 96:2), come to know (Isa. 52:6), publish (Deut. 32:3), sing (Ps. 61:8), and pray (Ps. 140:13)

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10. Then did the men revere with great reverence, and said unto him, What is it thou hast done? For the men knew that away from the presence of Yahweh he was fleeing, — for he had told them.
11. Then said they unto him, What shall we do to thee, that the sea may cease raging over us? For the sea was raging more and more.

unto it. However, they will do this with real understanding of its principles, not merely with a desire to be different, or to force academic details upon unwilling ears. To use the Name is to assume the responsibility to manifest the Name, and that requires that the Divine principles manifested by the Son, be built into the characters of the "people of the Name." Otherwise the Name will not be a blessing unto them, but a curse.

**"The God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land"** — In this statement, Jonah joined some of the attributes of Deity with His name. Under the circumstances, the statement that Yahweh is the Creator of the "sea and the dry land" was most appropriate, for the crew could see in the stormy waves, and feel in the roaring hurricane, the manifestations of His presence. They learned from the teaching of Jonah that Yahweh is the Controller of both Land and Stormy Sea.

### **Sacrifice And Conversion — Vv. 10-16**

*The crew was deeply impressed with the evidence of Divine power manifested in the storm, particularly in view of Jonah's account of the God Whom he served. So much so, indeed, that they were reluctant to dispose of the prophet of such a mighty God in the way in which Jonah himself suggested. They attempted to bring the ship to land, but in vain; and only then, in desperation, they cast forth Jonah into the sea. Immediately there a great calm. They realised that Yahweh was supreme, and were converted. As a result they offered a sacrifice unto Yahweh, and vowed vows. Jonah's sacrifice, therefore, brought forth fruit to the glory of the Father, in the conversion of the crew.*

### **VERSE 10**

**"The men were exceedingly afraid"**—They recognised the power of Yahweh over the elements, and feared to offend Him in any way.

**"Why hast thou done this?"** — The members of the crew now began to interrogate Jonah. He had already told them that he was fleeing from Palestine, but had not disclosed the reason. Now they desired to know this in order that they might learn the cause of Yahweh's anger.

**"The men knew that he fled from the presence of Yahweh"**— See note, v. 3. They knew that he fled from the Land of Israel, for this is what is meant by the phrase, "the presence of Yahweh." Actually they knew nothing of Yahweh until now that Jonah had revealed that he was a worshipper of the God of Israel. All they knew previously about Jonah was that for some undisclosed reason he wanted to flee to Tarshish.

### **VERSE 11**

**"What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?"**—Their own gods had proved completely ineffectual (vv. 5-6), but the fact of the storm in the light of Jonah's declaration, revealed that the God whom he served was powerful to punish, and therefore, also, to save. Jonah's declaration of his belief, as well as the demonstration of Yahweh's power, thus drew these Gentiles to the God of Israel.

**"The sea wrought, and was tempestuous"**—The margin renders this: "The sea grew more and more tempestuous." As the crew discussed their problem with Jonah on the deck of the storm-tossed ship, the raging sea became wilder and wilder, and in this they could

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12. And he said unto them, Take me up and hurl me into the sea, that the sea may cease raging over you,—for I do know that for my sake is this great tempest upon you.
13. Nevertheless the men wrought hard to bring it back unto the land but could not,—for the sea was raging over them more and more.

feel the power of Yahweh. Already the ship was in danger of breaking up, and the situation had become perilous in the extreme. There was an urgency about the whole situation that brooked no delay.

### VERSE 12

**“Take me up and cast me forth into the sea”**—When Jonah made this request, he knew nothing of the fish prepared for his reception, nor of the subsequent adventures that awaited him. He therefore imagined that he would be thrown to his death. He preferred to die rather than return and preach to Nineveh, believing that the delay that would ensue would be too long to effect a reform within the prescribed time limit. By this means, his death would contribute to the destruction of Israel's enemy, and Jonah preferred to sacrifice himself to that end, in order that his people might be saved.

In this way, Jonah typed the Lord Jesus. There are flaws in the type, of course, as is inevitable. If there were not, then the type would be as the reality. A type is merely an outline, a silhouette providing the shadow of that which is to come, but not revealing the full details thereof. Jonah was the sign, not the reality which was manifested by the Lord.

The sacrifice that Jonah was prepared to make for his people, also played a part in saving the sailors on the vessel, and therefore, like the offering of the Lord, was designed to save Gentiles as well as Jews from the death that faced them.

**“For I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you”**—Jonah realised that he could not escape Yahweh's power, for He is the God of both sea and land (v. 9). Therefore the term “to go

from the presence of Yahweh” (v. 3) signifies to leave that land on which He had placed His name (Deut. 11), not to find a place upon the earth to which God's power cannot reach. He realised, too, that in turning from the mission appointed him, he was risking his own life, but he was prepared to do that in order that he might save his people.

### VERSE 13

**“Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land”**—In the mighty storm, the crew had evidence of the tremendous power of Yahweh, and recognising that Jonah was His prophet, they felt that they would offend Him further by acceding to his request and consigning him to a watery grave. Considerations such as these, rather than personal kindness, moved them to try and save Jonah (v. 14). They did not want to be held responsible for his death. They are like people who are brought to a knowledge of the Truth, and who, recognising the guilt of Jewry in crucifying the Lord, attempt to disassociate themselves from such action, without completely performing the will of God. The sailors “rowed hard” because the mast and sails (the tack-ling) were already gone (v. 5).

**“The sea wrought and was tempestuous”**—See note v. 11. The more they tried to bring the ship to land, the worse the storm raged, until they realised that the attempt was hopeless.

### VERSE 14

**“They cried unto Yahweh”**—These Gentiles had been so impressed by the manifestation of Divine power that they realised that Yahweh is God. Acknowledging His omnipotence, they abandoned their own gods, and directed



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14. Then cried they unto Yahweh and said, Ah now Yahweh, pray let it not be that we perish for this man's life, neither lay upon us innocent blood,— for thou O Yahweh as thou hast pleased hast ever done.
15. So they took up Jonah and hurled him into the sea,— and the sea left off her roaring.
16. Then did the men revere Yahweh with a great reverence,— and offered sacrifice to Yahweh, and vowed vows.

their prayers to Him. This incident, when recognised as part of the type or sign of Jonah, should have taught true Israelites, that the sacrifice of the antitypical Jonah (he upon whom the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove) would be efficacious to save Gentiles as well as Jews, and that the time was at hand for the Gospel to be preached to Gentiles for their conversion (Matt. 16:1-4).

**“Lay not upon us innocent blood”**—This is the attitude of all who are brought to a realisation of the Truth. They recognise the tragedy of the Lord's crucifixion, in that those responsible for it murdered the “prince of life,” whilst, at the same time, they realise that the predetermined counsel of God was fulfilled in the sacrificial death of the Lord. These principles are foreshadowed in the experiences of Jonah. Contrast the pleading attitude of these Gentiles, with the bold, defiant words of Jewry at the trial of Christ (Matt. 27:25).

### VERSE 15

**“They took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea”** — Their

prayer to Yahweh (v. 14) revealed that they had been converted in belief, and now this was followed by action, as they heeded the instruction of the prophet.

**“The sea ceased from her raging”**—The effect was instantaneous. The storm ceased, and there was a calm. These remarkable events were awe-inspiring in their effect.

### VERSE 16

**“The men feared Yahweh exceedingly”**—Such a fear is the beginning of true wisdom (Prov. 1:7). Their previous allegiance to their Gentile gods had been replaced by a wholesome respect for Yahweh.

**“Offered a sacrifice”**—Though their education in Divine worship was not then complete, they did what they thought was right. Perhaps Jonah had given them some instruction as to what they should do.

**“And made vows”**—These vows doubtless had relation to their future service. When they arrived at land they would seek out the complete manner in which they should worship Yahweh, and apply themselves to it.

## TRUE RELIGION

“Religion is of two kinds — that, namely, which is invented by the thinking of sinful flesh; and that which is revealed of God. The former is superstition, and leads men to do a vast deal more than God requires of them, or less than He has appointed. The religion of God, on the contrary, is occupying a commanding and dignified position between the two extremes. In the exercise of it men are moved to action — *by the spirit which is the truth.*”

— J. Thomas, *Elpis Isarel.*

## CHAPTER 2

### *Preservation (The Fish)*

*Chapter two should really commence from v. 17 of chapter one where the fish is introduced into the record. Controversy has raged as to whether this fish was a whale, or one specially prepared of Yahweh for the purpose. Some have stated that the miracle was possible by the use of some kinds of whales, others have alleged that it was impossible. Both seem to overlook that in the circumstances of Jonah we are in the presence of miracle, and whether or not a normally constructed mammal was sufficient for the purpose is beside the point. We have never known anybody converted to a belief of the Truth by resolving the type of fish used on this occasion, for the circumstances of Jonah's preservation in its belly, and the remarkable and convenient spewing up of his person on the Syrian shore were equally miraculous. The circumstances are amazing, but no more so than the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the miracle that exceeds all miracles, so that when an attempt is made to rationalise other miraculous incidents like creation, the crossing of the Red Sea, the preservation of Jonah in the belly of the fish, or the turning of water into wine, the resurrection of Christ still remains to baffle those who see bounds to God's power. No, the man of faith will accept as true that which Yahweh has caused to be recorded in His word. In this age when we clearly see the miracle of fulfilling Bible prophecy, we must not limit the mighty power of Yahweh. The preservation of Israel down the ages, the revival of the Jewish state today, is a miracle comparable with the preservation of Jonah.*

*Of course, Jonah did not know that he would be preserved. When he was thrown into the raging ocean, he believed that he was being given over to death. Instead, he was swallowed by the fish, and kept alive to complete the mission Yahweh had set him to do. He expressed this in the Psalm of thanksgiving that he subsequently composed. He described how he was thrown into the watery grave, how he sank to the bottom among the weeds of the ocean, and how, when he was on the point of drowning, in his extremity he poured out a last petition to God. At that point the huge fish, the Divine means of his salvation, loomed out of the murky depths and Jonah was swallowed alive. The expressions of his consequent prayer of thanksgiving are largely drawn from the Psalms, and are Messianic in their concept, once again pointing to the experiences of the prophet as typical of those of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

## PROPHECY OF JONAH

17. Now Yahweh had appointed a great fish, to swallow up Jonah — and Jonah was in the belly of the fish, three days and three nights.

### Jonah In The Fish — V. 17 - Ch. 2:1

*On the point of death, Jonah is swallowed alive by a great fish, in whose belly he remains unharmed three days and three nights.*

### VERSE 17

“Yahweh had prepared” — The

Hebrew word *manah* signifies to “weight” out, and by implication to “allot,” constitute officially, or appoint (Strong). The word does not of itself indicate that the fish was created then and there, though the use of this word, throughout the book of Jonah (Ch. 4:6, 7, 8), could imply that a special fish was prepared.

## Jonah's Fish

The word in the Hebrew signifies a “monster” and can relate to any great fish; the word in the N.T. signifies “sea monster,” and is accurately translated in the R.V. margin as “sea-monster.”

Concerning whales, it has been noted: “There are over sixty kinds of cachalot (different kinds of whales with teeth in the lower jaw, e.g. sperm-whales) and all, with the exception of the Greenland whale, have gullets in proportion to their sizes. The throat of the common sperm-whale is capacious enough to give passage to the body of a man. Dying whales eject the contents of their stomachs, usually several great masses of white, semi-transparent substance, of huge size, and irregular shape. It has teeth only in the lower jaw, and is unable to masticate, and therefore is compelled to swallow whole, or tear into sizeable pieces and bolt complete. Witnesses have described masses of ejected food up to eight feet by six feet in size. There is on record the skeleton of a shark in a whale, some sixteen feet in length (See *Sixty-three Years In Engineering*, p. 298, by Francis Fox).”

Pusey, writing on Jonah, p. 46, describes the experience of a sailor in the Mediterranean, who was swallowed by a whale, and then cast out alive and little injured. The fish was twenty feet long, nine feet wide, and weighed 4,000 lbs.

Hastings Bible Dictionary refers to the remarkable experiences of James Bartley who was swallowed by a sperm-whale near Falkland Islands, 1891. The whale was caught and killed, the carcass drawn alongside of the ship, the blubber was removed throughout one day and part of a night, and on the next morning, the stomach was hoisted on to the deck. The sailor was found doubled up inside, alive though unconscious. He had temporarily lost his reason. He recovered later to describe his experience: the awful darkness, the slimy, yielding substance, the unbearable heat of his incarceration in the stomach of the whale.

M. Joubin in *Academy of Sciences* states: “A sperm whale can easily swallow an animal taller and heavier than a man. The animals, when swallowed, can keep alive some time in the whale's stomach.”

Even from a natural standpoint, therefore, there is no reason to dispute the possibility of Jonah's experience, but in the account concerning him, and of the sign he presented to Israel and the world, we are in the presence of miracle.

## PROPHECY OF JONAH

**"A great fish"**—There is nothing in the original word to identify the animal, for the Hebrew word merely signifies a "monster." To call it a whale is not in accordance with the original. The white shark of the Mediterranean, which sometimes measures twenty-five feet in length, has been known to swallow a man whole, and even a horse. This may have been the "great fish." We do not know, and are in the presence of a miracle.

**"Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights"**—In Matthew 12:40, the Lord likened the experience of Jonah to the period of time in which he, also, would be in the "heart of the earth." A careful consideration of the evidence indicates that the Lord was crucified on a Wednesday afternoon, that he was buried just before 6 p.m. Wednesday, and that he rose at the conclusion of Saturday (i.e. 6 p.m. Saturday—when the first day commenced). This would mean that he was literally three days and three nights "in the heart of the earth." The three days would be Thursday, Friday and Saturday; the three nights would be Wednesday evening, Thursday evening and Friday evening. It is obvious from the date given in Exod. 16:1 that the first Passover was slain on a Wednesday, and it is appropriate that the true Passover should answer exactly to the time period thus suggested. Exodus 16:1 states that the children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin on the fifteenth day of the second month, which, with thirty days to the month, amounted to the 45th day from the beginning of the year. On this day the people of Israel murmured because of hunger, and on the morrow they received manna for the first time. This they continued to gather each day for the next six days. The following seventh day was a Saturday (Exod. 16:23), showing that the day they arrived at the wilderness of Sin and commenced to

murmur was also a Saturday. By easy computation, with the use of a calendar, it will be seen that if the fifteenth day of the second month was a Saturday, the fourteenth day of the first month, when the Passover was slain was a Wednesday. That being so, the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea on what we would call a Saturday evening, but, according to their computation (in which the evening before is counted as the beginning of the next day) the first day of the week. Later, the same day, they sung the Song of Deliverance, as they saw, in the mighty miracle of the Red Sea crossing, a manifestation of Yahweh's mercy, and their own salvation from death.

Christ came to Bethany "six days before the Passover" (John 12:1). This was the 9th of Abib, for though the Lamb was slain on the fourteenth of the month, Passover day was not celebrated until the fifteenth. The next day, five days before Passover, he entered the city of Jerusalem (John 12:12). This was a Saturday, but it was within the prescribed limits of a Sabbath's day journey to travel that distance (Acts 1:12), so that the Lord kept strictly to the Law. From that point of time, each day is carefully marked out by the Gospel writers, revealing the sayings and doings of the Lord during that dramatic and crucial period. If the tenth was a Saturday, the fourteenth, when the Lord was crucified was a Wednesday. If this day is accepted for the crucifixion it will harmonise all the Gospel accounts. For example, Mark 16:1 states that certain women "bought sweet spices" that they might anoint the Lord. They "bought" or purchased, not "brought," these spices *after* "the sabbath was past" (see *Diaglott*). However, according to Luke's account (Ch. 23:56), they prepared these *before* the Sabbath, for they later rested on that day. Mark states that they "bought" the spices *after* the sabbath, and Luke writes that

# PROPHECY OF JONAH

## CHAPTER 2

1. Then prayed Jonah, unto Yahweh his God,— out of the belly of the fish;

they prepared them *before* the sabbath! Who was right? Both were right, as John shows, for he declared that one of the sabbaths in question was not the normal weekly sabbath, but the Passover sabbath, the fifteenth of Abib, so that the joint accounts of Mark, Luke and John reveal that there were two sabbaths that week (the normal weekly sabbath, and the Passover) and that these two sabbaths were separated by one day, in which these women bought and prepared the spices for anointing. This shows conclusively that Christ must have been crucified on a Wednesday, and buried late that day. The Thursday was the Passover, and thus a high day sabbath. On the Friday the women bought the spices as recorded by Mark, and prepared them as recorded by Luke. They "rested on the Sabbath" according to Luke, that Sabbath being the normal weekly Sabbath. Matthew 28:1 shows that the Lord rose from the dead at the end of the Sabbath, which would be what we term 6 p.m. Saturday. This commenced the "first day of the week," for the Jews commenced their day at 6 p.m. the night before. It was on a Saturday evening, or the first day of the Jewish week, that the children of Israel made ready to pass through the divided waters of the Red Sea. Christ rose from the dead this day. So Matthew records: *In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn (Darby—"dusk") toward the first day of the week ...*" (Matt. 28:1). The word "dawn" in this place does not signify the dawn of the sunrising, as is shown by its use in Luke 23:54 where it is rendered "drew on," and where it obviously refers to the approach of the sabbath, that is, 6 p.m. Friday.

A Jewish day of 24 hours, commences at 6 p.m., so that what we would call Friday 6 p.m., the Jews

observe as the beginning of the Sabbath. When Luke wrote that "the sabbath drew on" (Luke 23:54), he meant that it was nearing 6 p.m. on Friday. According to Vine's Dictionary, this is the only place, apart from Matthew 28:1 where the word *epiphosko* is used. Therefore, if the word is used to signify 6 p.m. Friday in Luke 23:54, the context of Matthew 28:1 demands that it there signify 6 p.m. Saturday, for it was "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn (or draw on) towards the first of the week," that the dramatic events recorded by Matthew took place.

This being the case the Lord, having been buried just prior to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, rose from the dead immediately after 6 p.m. on Saturday. Thus he was literally in the "heart of the earth three days and three nights." All the so-called difficulties associated with this period of the Lord's ministry can be reconciled with the above.

### CH. 2, VERSE 1

"Then Jonah prayed" — This prayer is not recorded. The Psalm that follows, and which is recorded in vv. 2-9, was a Psalm or prayer of thanksgiving that Jonah uttered after his deliverance. This is obvious from v. 7, in which he makes mention of the unrecorded prayer he uttered, and from the general expressions of the Psalm which presuppose his deliverance. The R.V. places a full stop at the end of v. 1, thus separating the Psalm from the Prayer. Jonah therefore uttered both a petition and a prayer of thanksgiving. The petition is referred to in v. 1, and the prayer of thanksgiving follows. In the latter, Jonah states: "Thou hast brought up my life from corruption" (v. 6) which shows that he composed it after the fish had vomited him out upon dry land. On the other hand, the unrecorded

## PROPHECY OF JONAH

2. And said — I cried — out of my distress — unto Yahweh. And he answered me; Out of the belly of hades called I, Thou didst hear my voice.

prayer was uttered as life was failing, and he was swallowed by the fish.

**“Unto Yahweh his God out of the fish’s belly”** — Jonah recognised that Yahweh is a God of mercy, and recalling the words of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple, “What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man towards this house; then hear Thou in heaven, Thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart Thou knowest” (1 Kings 8:38-39). In his extremity, he turned in thought to the Temple in Jerusalem (v. 4). The Psalmist (Ps. 138:2) and Daniel in exile (Dan. 6:10) did likewise. The Temple, in Jerusalem, was the earthly symbol of the heavenly reality (1 Kings 8:27). The Shekinah glory glowing in the complete darkness of the Most Holy testified to the presence of Yahweh in the midst of His people (Exod. 25:22).

**“Out of the Fish’s belly”**—In the belly of the fish, and, as it seemed to him, with death about to claim him, Jonah sought for one brief moment, the sweet communion of prayer with the God Whom he loved, and Whom he had served so faithfully during his life. At the conclusion of the prayer, he lapsed into unconsciousness (v. 7), in which state he remained for “three days and three nights,” at the conclusion of which the fish “vomited out Jonah upon the dry land” (v. 10). In type, therefore, he experienced death, burial and resurrection.

### **Jonah’s Psalm Of Thanksgiving — Vv. 2-9**

*This Psalm is divided into two sections (1) — Jonah’s prayer in the belly of the fish (v. 2); (2) — Jonah’s thanksgiving for the Divine mercy (vv. 3-9). It*

*acknowledges that his punishment was God-directed (v. 3); expresses his appeal for mercy in his great distress (v. 4); records his amazing experiences among the weeds and mountains of the sea (vv. 5-6); sets forth the efficacy of prayer (v. 7); and proclaims the value of Divine worship (vv. 8-9). As Jonah typed the Lord Jesus, however, and his experiences foreshadowed those of Christ, this Psalm should be studied with the Lord ever in mind.*

*His Psalm describes how the stormy waves of the Mediterranean rushed upon him, to draw him into their embrace, and thrust him deep into their depths (v. 3). He sank beneath the waters (v. 6), down into the very valleys that exist under the blue waters of the ocean. There the weeds wrapped themselves about him to trap him in their coils (v. 5). His condition became desperate, and he despaired of life. He felt that he was drowning, and that the end was near. “The bars of the earth were about me for ever,” he declared (v. 6). But, at that moment of direst extremity, there loomed out of the murky depths the huge fish “prepared of Yahweh,” and Jonah was swallowed up. This frightening experience so affected him that he fainted, and a merciful unconsciousness claimed him. His “soul fainted” (v. 7), and he became as dead. Just prior to this, and seemingly on the point of death, he uttered a short, fervent prayer to Yahweh, “and was heard in that he feared.”*

### **VERSE 2**

**“I cried”** — So also did the Lord Jesus, and was “saved out of (ek) death” (Heb. 5:7).

**“By reason of mine affliction”**—The margin renders: “Because of my affliction.” This is similar in expression to Ps. 18:6 and Ps. 118:5 (see margin), both of which

## PROPHECY OF JONAH

3. For thou hast cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, And a flood enveloped me,—All thy breakers and thy rolling waves over me passed.
4. And I said, I am driven out from before thine eyes,—Yet will I again have regard unto thy holy temple:
5. The waters encompassed me to the peril of my life, The roaring deep enveloped me,—The sea-weed was wrapped about my head:

are Messianic in character, and point forward to the afflictions that the Lord was called upon to endure, and out of which he was ultimately saved. Both Jonah and Jesus sought the help of Yahweh in time of trouble and distress.

### “Out of the belly of hell” —

The word *sheol* (see margin) signifies the place of concealment, and not the place of torture! Jesus, likewise, descended into hell (Acts 2:31), and from there (in the sense implied in Heb. 12:24), he cried unto God, and was brought again from the dead. Peter declared of him that “it was not possible that he should be holden of death” (Acts 2:24).

### VERSE 3

“**Thou hadst cast me into the deep**” — Actually the sailors cast Jonah into the deep, but Yahweh is said to have done it because He was responsible for the circumstances which brought it about. The sailors were but the agents to that end. Likewise, in relation to the sacrifice of the Lord, his death was by “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23), whilst the Jews, in their wickedness, were but the agents to that end. The death and burial of the Lord is foretold in the Messianic Psalm—Ps. 88:6 (cp. v. 3), in similar terms to those used by Jonah.

“**The floods compassed me about**” — Jonah thus described the fear that seized him as he was thrown into the raging sea. The Lord, likewise, experienced “the floods of ungodly men” (Ps. 18:4).

“**All Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me**” — The churning ocean, with its fierce breakers, and its powerful rolling billows, swallowed Jonah up, drawing him

down to its depths. The language is similar to Psalm 42:7, where the expressions denote the waves of persecution and opposition that would destroy the Psalmist. They are also found in the language of Psalm 69:1, 2, 14, 15, a Messianic Psalm which is prophetic of the overwhelming opposition and persecution the Lord experienced, even from the members of his own family (v. 8). Therefore, Jonah’s experience, in this moment of terror, foreshadowed that which the Lord endured, as the rolling tide of hate and anger in Jewry engulfed him, and ultimately submerged him in death.

### VERSE 4

“**Then I said**” — In these expressions, Jonah confessed to the thought of his heart. Like Hezekiah, who also typed the Lord Jesus, he believed that his affliction was beyond hope of help (see Isa. 38:11).

“**I am cast out of Thy sight**” — Jonah believed that he had acted in such a way that Yahweh would ignore his distress, and take no heed of his extremity.

“**Yet**” — The RSV renders this as “How shall I look,” but the RV. and other authorities support the A.V. which seems more appropriate. The natural thought of a drowning man is to turn to God. Jonah recognised that Yahweh was predominantly a God of mercy. Therefore, though death seemed inevitable, and he recognised that in the circumstances God was justified in leaving him to die, he decided to turn to Him and seek His help.

“**Toward Thy holy temple**” — Yahweh had promised help for such who might do so. See 1 Kings 8:38; Ps. 5:7.

## PROPHECY OF JONAH

### VERSE 5

**"The waters compassed me about"** — The Lord likened the accumulation of persecution and trouble that he would experience, and which would bring him to the cross, to a "baptism" (Matt. 20:22-23; Luke 12:50), and this is here fittingly likened to being overwhelmed in the flood of trouble. See the same expression used in Psalm 40:12, a Messianic Psalm.

**"Even to the soul"** — Again the expression is used in Psalm 69:1 and applied to Christ in trouble. The "soul" is the life. As Jonah sank to the bottom of the ocean he despaired of life, and thus poured out a heartfelt petition for mercy to Yahweh.

**"The weeds were wrapped about my head"** — Jonah sank to the bottom of the sea before he was swallowed by the fish.

### JONAH'S PSALM

The expressions of Jonah's Psalm are appropriate to one who typed the Lord Jesus, for they can apply to both the type and anti-type. To illustrate this, we have set the words of Jonah alongside expressions used concerning the Lord Jesus. This analysis is not exhaustive, but merely indicative of how closely the prophet's words can apply to the Lord.

#### Jonah

*"I cried by reason of mine affliction unto Yahweh,  
And He heard me" (v. 2),*

*"Out of the belly of hell (Sheol) cried I,  
And Thou heardest my voice (v. 2)*

*"Thou didst cast me into the deep,  
Into the heart of the seas;  
And the floods were about me;  
All thy waves and thy billows passed over me" (v. 3).*

*"The waters compassed me about" (v. 5).*

*"Even to the soul"*

*"Thou hast brought up my life from corruption" (v. 6).*

#### The Lord Jesus

*"He offered up prayers with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him out of death and was heard in that he feared (Heb. 5:7).*

*"His soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption" (Acts 2:31).*

*"Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,  
In darkness, in the deeps.  
Thy wrath lieth hard upon me,  
And Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves." (Messianic Psalm 88:6.)*

*"Innumerable evils have compassed me about" (Ps. 40:10).*

*"Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul" (Ps. 69:1).*

*"He saw no corruption" (Acts 2:27, 31).*

The Psalms cited above are Messianic Psalms. They express the heartfelt utterances of the Lord as they were prophetically revealed in the experiences of David and others. They illustrate what is meant by Peter when he declared that "the spirit of Christ was in the prophets" (1 Pet. 1:11); and in considering the Psalm of Jonah, it is clearly seen how the same spirit was in him.



## PROPHECY OF JONAH

6. To the roots of the mountains went I down, As for the earth her bars were about me age-abidingly,— Then didst thou bring up—out of the pit—my life, O Yahweh my God.
7. When my soul darkened itself over me, Yahweh I remembered,— And my prayer came in Unto thee, Unto thy holy temple.

### VERSE 6

**“I went down to the bottom of the mountains”** — Graphically he describes his remarkable experience, as he was drawn down to the very valleys formed under the waters of the ocean.

**“The earth with her bars was about me for ever”** — The RV renders this: “its bars closed upon me forever.” This expressed the feelings of Jonah. He thought that he had come to his end, and that a watery grave had closed upon him. Job used a similar expression to describe the grave (Job 17:16); hence Jonah spake as though he had been buried; he thought his end had come. The Hebrew word for “ever” is *olahm*, and signifies “for the hidden period,” which, in his case, would have been until the future resurrection.

**“Yet thou hast brought up my life”** — Jonah expressed his gratitude to Yahweh, that in spite of all that he had done, and the bitter experiences he had suffered, the mercy of God had been still manifested towards him. The expressions of this verse show that the Psalm was composed after he had been spued up by the fish upon the land.

**“From corruption”** — Jonah lapsed into unconsciousness in the belly of the fish, and thus was figuratively raised from the dead without suffering corruption. In this he prefigured the resurrection of the Lord. See Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:27, 31.

**“O Yahweh my God”** — He thankfully acknowledged the Divine mercy by invoking the covenant Name of Deity, and expressed by the use of the pronoun “my”, his adoration towards Him.

### VERSE 7

**“When my soul fainted within me”** — The word “fainted” is from the Hebrew, *hataph*, “to cover,” or “involve in darkness.” Complete physical exhaustion claimed the prophet as he found himself in the belly of the fish. His eyes began to mist over, his brain gradually became numb, as mental darkness claimed him, and he began to lapse into unconsciousness. The Lord experienced a similar state on the cross, and this is prophetically described in the expressions of Psalm 142:3.

**“I remembered Yahweh”** — The spiritual training of a lifetime asserted itself against the growing numbness of Jonah’s mind, as physical exhaustion brought him to the point of unconsciousness. Leaning heavily upon the mercy of Yahweh, he poured out a heart-felt prayer for help. He perhaps recalled such expressions in the Psalms as Ps. 40:1: “He inclined unto me and heard my cry.” The words of the Psalmist express the tender condescension of Yahweh. He likens Him to inclining His ear, bending closely down, to hear the whispered plea for help, or the request of one so desperately weak or sick, as to be on the point of death, and barely able to speak. Jonah, in his extremity, whispered his plea to heaven and was heard.

**“My prayer came in unto thee”** — Jonah’s experience shows that God is always willing to hearken to the voice of His servants, no matter what their condition might be.

**“Into Thine holy temple”** — Yahweh is represented as dwelling in the Most Holy Place on earth (Exod. 25:22), for the shekinah glory in the earthly Temple was a

## PROPHECY OF JONAH

8. They who take heed to the vanities of falsehood do their own loving kindness forsake.
9. But I with the voice of praise will sacrifice unto thee, What I have vowed I will pay, — Salvation belongeth to Yahweh!

symbol of the heavenly reality (cp. 1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 11:4; 18:6).

### VERSE 8

**“They that observe lying vanities”** — These “lying vanities” are the false gods such as the crew had worshipped before being converted. See Ps. 31:6. Unfortunately, the history of Israel reveals that the people have “observed lying vanities” many times to the exclusion of faith in Yahweh. False worship even when the name of Yahweh is mouthed is a “lying vanity.” See Deut. 31:21; Jer. 10:14-15; 14:22; 18:15. The materialistic philosophy of today is a lying vanity, a form of idolatry to which it is easy to succumb. See Col. 3:5.

**“Forsake their own mercy”** — The Hebrew word *chehesed* is perhaps better rendered as “loving-kindness.” This loving-kindness, or mercy, is a title or characteristic of Yahweh (Exod. 20:6). It is sometimes rendered as covenant-love, a rather appropriate expression, for Yahweh’s love, mercy, or loving-kindness is best expressed through His covenant. The Hebrew word is expressive of kindness, or by euphemism (a figure of rhetoric by which an unpleasant thing is designated by an indirect or milder term) it signifies reproof. Thus they who make an idol of the flesh, who worship self, who give way to such things as self-pity instead of manifesting faith, lose the benefit of the mercy of Yahweh. His loving-kindness, His covenant-love is expressed in what does not seem as love, even correction. For discipline and correction are manifestations of Divine love. We are exhorted that God corrects those whom He loves (Heb. 12:6-12), and that though Jesus “were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb. 5:8). This lesson was impressed

on Jonah, as it was also on the Lord Jesus. Paul adds: “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11). The ultimate end of correction as designed by Yahweh, is for the good and benefit of the one corrected. This was the case both with Jonah, Job, and with others (see James 5:11). Jonah was brought to realise this, and to ultimately find in all his terrifying experiences, the merciful interest of Yahweh in his welfare, guiding him along a path that would be to his final benefit. He came to see that those who observe lying vanities, whether it be in the gods of the Gentiles, or in their own attempts to divert Yahweh’s will (such as his attempt to flee to Tarshish) forsake their own good, or the benefits that God has designed for those who in faith submit to His will.

### VERSE 9

**“I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving”** — In view of the great mercy of God, and the benefit that the prophet had already received in being rescued from his plight, he pledged himself to present a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto Yahweh (Lev. 7:12), with the appropriate prayer and praise (Ps. 42:5). The same expression is found in the Messianic Psalm 116:17, 18 which was used at the celebration of the Passover.

**“I will pay that that I have vowed”** — Christ, on the cross, prayed likewise, for he uttered the 22nd Psalm. See v. 25.

**“Salvation is of Yahweh”** — Surely the mind of Jonah must have turned to the remarkable deliverance at the Red Sea, when

## PROPHECY OF JONAH

10. So then Yahweh spake unto the fish,— and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

Moses reminded the people that "Salvation is of Yahweh" (Exod. 14:13), and they later witnessed the truth of those words in their deliverance from certain death. How appropriately the experiences of Jonah bridge those of Moses and of Christ, and how completely and fully does the experience of the latter fulfil all that which was foreshadowed in the lives of the former. What a beautiful Psalm Jonah composed on this occasion, and how clearly it reveals him as the sign or type of the Christ. The very name Jesus is expressive of this concluding comment of the prophet, for it is compounded of two words:

*Yah* and *Shua*: Yahshua, or Yahweh will save. See 2 Cor. 5:19.

### VERSE 10

**"Yahweh spake unto the fish"**  
— The fish was impelled towards the coast, where it disgorged Jonah on the dry land. Thus he was figuratively resurrected from *sheol* or the grave, which, in this case was the belly of the fish. In fulfilment of the type, Jesus came forth from hades, or the grave; and Israel is yet to be ejected from her political grave among the nations, the waters of the great symbolic deep (Isa. 57:20). The Psalm was evidently composed after the fish had vomited Jonah out of its mouth.

### HEARTY OBEDIENCE

The principle laid down in the scripture is that **MAN HONORS GOD IN BELIEVING HIS WORD AND OBEYING HIS LAWS.** There is no other way in which men can honor their Creator. This honor, however, consists not in mechanical obedience; in mere action without intelligence and volition, such as matter yields to the natural laws; but in an enlightened, hearty, and voluntary obedience, while the individual possesses the power not to obey if he thinks best. Does a man feel honored, or glorified, by the compulsory obedience of a slave? Certainly not; and for the simple reason, that it is involuntary, or forced. But, let a man by his excellencies command the willing services of free men—of men who can do their own will and pleasure; yet voluntarily obey him, and, if he required it, are prepared to sacrifice their lives, fortunes, and estates, and all for the love they bear him; would not such a man esteem himself honored, and glorified, in the highest degree by such signal conformity to his will? Unquestionably; and such is the honor and glory which God requires of men.

— J. Thomas, *Elpis Israel*.

# CHAPTER 3

## Proclamation (The City)

*Jonah had promised that he would obey Yahweh (Ch. 2: 9), and once more the command was given him to preach at Nineveh. This "second time" he obeyed, with the result that the people heeded his message and repented. These circumstances formed part of the sign to which the Lord directed the attention of his contemporaries, 1900 years ago. If they had studied carefully the story of Jonah, they would have learned that Jesus would not only die and be buried, but would be raised again the third day, and that the terms of salvation would be preached unto Gentiles. Paul later wrote: "Through their fall (the fall of Jewry) salvation is come unto the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:11). In the type, or sign to which Christ made reference, the term "second time" (Jonah 3:1), seems to have application to the two "keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:19) by which its secrets are opened to those who will hear. It was the duty of the priests to administer this knowledge unto the people (Mal. 2:7), but they neglected to do so, with the result that they "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men" (Matt. 23: 13). The keys were then delivered unto the Apostles through Peter. There are two keys, and they reveal the two stages to the Kingdom of God—first suffering and then glory (cp. Matt. 16:21; 17:2), as well as the two stages in its proclamation: first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles (Rom. 2:10). The Apostles were willing to proclaim the Gospel to Jews, but most reluctant to do so to the Gentiles. This reluctance was foreshadowed by Jonah's attitude, for he, like the Apostles, did not at first understand Yahweh's purpose with the Gentiles.*

*When Jonah is studied as a sign or a type, various aspects are revealed. Firstly, he undoubtedly typed the Lord Jesus as an individual. But he also typed the multitudinous Christ, in its preaching to the Gentiles, and revealed the purpose of God to that end before the nation of Israel. This appears from the chapter now before us. It records how the prophet reluctantly preached to the Ninevites who repented of their sins in consequence. The Apostles were sent on a similar mission. Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers: "Ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward . . . that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of this promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:3-6). This second call to Jonah, therefore, foreshadowed the use of the second key that was given to Peter to unlock the Truth to Gentiles.*

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*This second call to Jonah, also points forward, in type, to the second advent of the Lord. The conversion of the Ninevites will find its complete fulfilment as a type at that time. Christ will deliver his ultimatum from Jerusalem to all mankind, and the "gospel of the age" will be preached to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," in the words, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Rev. 14:6-7). This message, yet to be proclaimed by the antitypical Jonah to all the world, is not unlike that proclaimed by the prophet himself to Nineveh. It will cause many to repent and seek the mercy of Yahweh. Those who refuse to do so will be destroyed (Isa. 60:12), even as Nineveh was warned would be her fate if she did not hearken.*

### CHAPTER 3

1. Then came the word of Yahweh unto Jonah the second time, saying:
2. Arise, get thee unto Nineveh, the great city, — and cry against it the cry that I am bidding thee.
3. So Jonah arose, and went his way unto Nineveh, according to the word of Yahweh, — Nineveh being a city great before God, of three days' journey.

#### **Jonah Pays His Vows — Vv. 1-4**

*In view of the mercy he had received, Jonah fulfilled his vow by preaching to the people of Nineveh at the command of Yahweh.*

#### **VERSE 1**

**"The word of Yahweh"** — See note ch. 1:1.

**"The second time"** — This second command delivered to the prophet recalls the narrative of the despondent Elijah at Horeb who was likewise sent back to Israel after he had fled from the opposition of Jezebel (1 Kings 19:4). This time Jonah obeyed in fulfilment of his promise to do so (Jonah 2:9). This "second time" suggests the use of the second key by Peter, in preaching the Gospel to Gentiles (Matt. 16:19; Acts 10:34-35). At first the Apostles were as reluctant as Jonah to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 10:47; 11:2-3; Rom. 9:3), showing that they no more comprehended the sign of Jonah than did the

Jews as a whole. An understanding of "the sign" after Christ had risen from the dead, would have revealed that such preaching was "timely."

#### **VERSE 2**

**"Preach unto it the preaching"** — In the Hebrew, this is the same word as is translated "cry" in Ch. 1:2. See notes at that place.

#### **VERSE 3**

**"According to the word of Yahweh"** — It is Yahweh's desire and purpose that Israel should reveal His goodness unto the Gentiles (Deut. 28:9-10). To that end, He chose them, guided them, educated them, revealed His will to them, in order that they might reflect His glory, and that they might be equipped to pass on to others the message of His plan. But, as Jeremiah observed, "they would not hear" (Jer. 13:11). The time will come, however, when Israel will be a blessing unto the nations instead of a curse, for men will then realise that Yahweh is with

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4. So Jonah began to enter into the city, one day's journey,—and he cried out and said—Yet forty days and Nineveh is to be overthrown!

the people (Zech. 8:13, 23). In the meantime, Christ has preached to modern Nineveh through His followers.

**“Nineveh was an exceeding great city”** — The margin renders this statement as “a city great of God.” This signifies that it was such a large city as to be beyond comparison with normal cities. A similar expression is used in regard to Nimrod as a hunter (Gen. 10:9), of Moses in the beauty of his countenance (Acts 7:20), and of the king of Babylon in his insatiable ambition (Isa. 14:13).

**“Of three days' journey”** — A day's journey was rated as twenty miles, so that Nineveh was approximately sixty miles in circumference, and thus a large city even by modern standards. According to Diodorus Siculus (1st cent. B.C.) and Herodotus (4th cent. B.C.), Nineveh was about sixty miles in circumference. This probably included the cities of Resen and Calah as well as Nineveh proper, for all three cities are lumped together as one in Genesis 10:12, under the general caption of “a great city.” The book of Jonah records that Nineveh contained “much cattle” (ch. 4:11), so that the city boundaries must have included large tracts of land for cultivation and grazing, in addition to the section for human habitation. These could well have been outside the main city walls which archaeological research indicates enclosed a much smaller area than here suggested. The population of the city was extensive, for it contained 120,000 children besides adults (Jonah 4:11).

### VERSE 4

**“Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey”**—This would be about twenty miles within the outer borders, so that he would have proceeded into the very heart of the city before delivering his

forthright, and peremptory, note of warning.

**“Yet forty days”** — Forty is used in Scripture as the number of probation. It is frequently associated with humiliation, affliction, and punishment (Deut. 25:3). Moses twice humbled himself in prayer and fasting for forty days (Deut. 9:9, 18), Elijah fasted for forty days (1 Kings 19:8), and Christ did likewise (Matt. 4:4). Israel was afflicted forty years (Num. 14:34), and Egypt was likewise (Ezek. 29:11-13). Forty days purification followed the birth of a boy, and twice forty days followed that of a girl (Lev. 12:4-5). The flood continued forty days and nights (Gen. 7:12); the Canaanites had forty years to repent after the spies had searched the land forty days (Num. 14:33). The old world had thrice forty years preaching to repent in (Gen. 6:3); Christ taught his disciples for forty days between resurrection and ascension (Acts 1:3, 9), and after forty years of preaching by the Apostles to the “Ninevites” of their generation, the Jewish State was destroyed in A.D.70.

**“Nineveh shall be overthrown”** — It was a harsh, urgent, uncompromising message that the prophet delivered. It spoke of terrible sins committed, and a terrible doom impending. But the fate of Nineveh was conditional and could be averted by the repentance of the people. This Jonah also told them. They saw a preacher who revealed in his very demeanour the truth of his words. They saw that he was filled with courage, confidence and faith in the words he uttered. Moreover, his words were more compelling, since he preached at a time when circumstances had created a political depression throughout Assyria, and there were manifest all the signs of some national calamity, some imminent collapse, so that, doubtless, men were searching

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5. And the people of Nineveh believed in God,—and proclaimed a fast, and clothed themselves in sackcloth, from the greatest of them, even unto the least of them.
6. And the word reached unto the king of Nineveh, so he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe from off him,—and covered him with sackcloth, and sat on ashes.
7. And he caused an outcry to be made—and said—throughout Nineveh, By decree of the king and of his great men, Be it known:— Man and beast, herd and flock, Let them taste nothing, Let them not feed, And water let them not drink:

around for means to avert it. The strange figure of Jonah in their midst, his foreign accent, his dogmatic declaration and warning, attracted their attention, and drew them to consider more closely the message he had to deliver.

### The Ninevites Repent — Vv. 5-9

*The Ninevites heeded the message of the strange, foreign preacher in their midst, and sought by repentance to avoid the otherwise inevitable national disaster. Why should they so act? Professor Rawlinson, in "Ancient Monarchies" vol. 2, pp. 379-380, states that about this time, Nineveh was in serious trouble, so that Assyrian history is "shrouded in darkness for forty years." It was this very decline of Assyria that had enabled Israel and the surrounding nations to rise in power (2 Kings 14:25-27), and now this same national weakness caused the people of Nineveh to repent.*

### VERSE 5

**"So the people of Nineveh believed God"** — The Hebrew is more expressive, for it reads: "Believed in God" as in Gen. 15:6; Exod. 14:31, etc. The reverses that the nation had then experienced provided a salutary preparation for effective preaching. The people were drawn to closely consider the message of Jonah, and as a result came to "believe in God." They believed in the God of Israel, and heeded His warning message.

**"Put on sackcloth"** — The custom of changing dress in time of mourning was not limited to Israel-

ites (see Ezek 26:16).

**"From the greatest of them to the least of them"** — The repentance was quite spontaneous and was manifested by all classes of society. It was not induced by royal decree, but stemmed from the hearts of the people as they were personally touched by the message of Jonah. The reluctant prophet had such a successful preaching campaign as he had hoped not to see!!

### VERSE 6

**"Word came unto the king of Nineveh"** — The king heard of the preaching of Jonah and the reaction of the people to it, and in view of the national crisis, he, too, was drawn to act in similar manner.

**"He arose from his throne"** — He humbled himself before the message of Yahweh.

**"He laid his robe from him"** — He put aside his royal garments, to clothe himself in sackcloth as a token of humiliation and mourning. The Hebrew word for "robe" (*addereth*) is the same word as is used for the "Babylonish garment" in Josh 7:21, so what Achan then took up, this Gentile king put down.

### VERSE 7

**"The decree of the king"** — He gave official approval to the words of Jonah, and proclaimed a mandate that the nation should humble itself before God.

**"Man nor beast"** — This part of the decree relates to domestic animals used by man.

**"Herd nor flock"** — These vast cities of antiquity abounded in

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8. Let both man and beast cover themselves with sackcloth, And let them cry unto God, mightily, — Yea let them turn every man from his wicked way, and from the violence which is in their hands:
9. Who knoweth whether God himself — may turn and grieve, — and turn away from the glow of his anger, That we perish not?
10. And God saw their doings, that they turned from their wicked way, — and God was grieved over the calamity which he had spoken of executing upon them, and executed it not.

parks where such could graze.

### VERSE 8

**“Let man and beast”** — It is not uncommon, even now, for animals to be decorated in times of national mourning or rejoicing. Herodotus relates that the Persians, on the occasion of the death of Masistius, clipped their horses and baggage animals (Ch. 9:24); Plutarch states that Alexander did the same when Hephaestion died (Alex. 72). The practise was apparently quite common. The dumb animals were thus made to share in their masters' fast and sorrow, as they shared their joy and feasting; their bleating and bellowing were so many appeals to Heaven for mercy (cp. Hos. 4:3; Joel 1. 20).

**“Cry mightily unto God”** — Thus a national day of prayer was enjoined.

**“Turn from his evil way”** — This part of the decree called upon the people to show how genuine was their repentance by bringing forth “fruits mete for it” (Luke 3:7-8).

**“And from the violence that is in their hands”** — This was a most appropriate part of the decree, for violence was a national characteristic of the Ninevites (Isa. 10: 13-14; Nah. 2:11-12; 3-1).

### VERSE 9

**“Who can tell if God will turn and repent”** — The king, in his decree, acknowledged the one true God, and expressed the hope that the Divine wrath may be averted by the timely repentance of the people and nation.

### VERSE 10

**“God saw their works”** — He

saw that their reformation was genuine, even though it may have been imperfect and temporary. There is no record of this remarkable incident in the recorded annals of Assyrian history, though, as indicated above, the records of that time are very meagre.

**“And God repented”** — The word “repent” signifies to change one's purpose. The sentence predicted against Nineveh was conditional, as Jonah was told (Ch. 4:2), in accordance with the principle laid down in Jeremiah 18:7-8 that if a nation against which sentence is pronounced turn from its evil way, the sentence shall not be executed. In contrast with these conditional warnings, the unconditional “gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom. 11:29). That is, they are promised unconditionally and will be fulfilled whatever happens. God will not “change his mind or purpose” in regard to the promises made to Abraham in relation to Israel. There is a need, therefore, to carefully understand what is meant by the Scriptural use of the word “repent.” It does not necessarily mean to be sorry for one's past action or for what one intended to do, but rather, to change one's mind and purpose. It is said of Esau that “he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears” (Heb. 12:17). What Esau attempted to do was to change his father's mind in the bestowal of the blessing on Jacob, but he found he could not do it. Esau did not manifest a sorrowful repentance, as the world understands the term, for his heart was filled with hatred against his brother, whom he would have slain if he could. On the other hand, after the people who heard



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the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost manifested sorrow (Acts 2:37), Peter called upon them to "repent" (v. 38) or to change their mind and purpose in relation to Christ, as the Greek word signifies. Peter later showed that God "granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18, and Paul that "Godly sorrow worketh repentance" (2 Cor. 7:10), or a change of heart and mind.

"He did it not" — The day of

judgment was postponed for Nineveh. Though the partial repentance of the people made little lasting impression on them, (see Isa. 26:16), the change effected by the preaching of Jonah was sufficient to delay the destruction of the city that finally occurred. This was in accordance with the will of Yahweh who still had a work of judgment on Israel for Assyria to accomplish (Isa. 10:10-12).

### THE TERMS OF RECONCILIATION

Men have not yet learned the lesson, that all they are called upon by God to do is to believe His word and obey His laws. He requires nothing more at their hands than this. If they neither believe nor do, or believe but do not obey, they are evil doers, and at enmity with Him. He asks men for actions, not words; for He will judge them 'according to their works' in the light of His law, and not according to their suppositious feelings and traditions. The reason why He will not permit men to prescribe for their own moral evils is because He is the physician, they the lepers; He their sovereign, they the rebels against His law. It is His prerogative, and His alone, to dictate the terms of reconciliation. Man has offended God. It becomes him, therefore, to surrender unconditionally; and, with the humility and teachableness of a child to receive with open heart and grateful feelings, whatever in the wisdom and justice, and benevolence of God, He may condescend to prescribe.

— J. Thomas, *Elpis Israel*.

# CHAPTER 4

## Education (Yahweh's Reproof)

*Jonah was thoroughly disheartened and displeased with the success that attended his preaching. He felt despondent and angry as he viewed the results. He would have preferred the destruction of the Assyrians, not because he was vindictive at all, but because he urgently required time in order to effect the complete reformation of his own people, and saw an opportunity to that end in the overthrow of this brutal power in the north. He saw in the preservation of this repentant people, an evidence of the merciful side of Yahweh's character, and yet, with shortsightedness, he did not appreciate that that same mercy was required for the salvation of his own people. We have set down Jonah's case, as it might be developed out of the Scriptures, together with Yahweh's answer as it can be extracted from the same wonderful Book. Meanwhile, the prophet was taught, and through him the Jews of Christ's day could have learned, that a merciful God sees beyond the requirements of one nation, to that of all; and that His mercy is boundless in its scope. We need no instruction in this, because we have been the recipients of such mercy when coming out of Gentilism to accept Christ. But do not let us be blind to the need of expressing to others, the very mercy that we receive from Yahweh, and so, in that way, pass on the message of Jonah.*

### CHAPTER 4

1. And it was vexing unto Jonah, with a great vexation, — and it angered him.
2. So he prayed unto Yahweh, and said — Ah now! Yahweh! Was not this my word while I was yet upon mine own soil? For this cause did I hasten to flee unto Tarshish, — Because I knew that thou art a GOD of favor and compassion, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and art grieved over calamity.

#### Jonah's Displeasure — Vv. 1-3

*The reprieve granted Nineveh so disturbed the prophet that he felt that he would rather not live. He turned to Yahweh in prayer expressing his displeasure, for he felt he had a just cause for it.*

#### VERSE 1

**"It displeased Jonah exceedingly"**  
— This is literally rendered: "It was evil to Jonah, a great evil." He was not merely displeased, he was, as rendered by Rotherham, thoroughly vexed. What was the

cause of his anger? This we have set out below.

**"He was very angry"** — The more he thought upon the matter, the greater became his vexation and irritability. It blinded his eyes to any good reason that Yahweh could possibly have for acting as He did.

#### VERSE 2

....**"He prayed"** — He did not lose faith, but carried his complaint to God. He thus showed wisdom. How seldom do we pray when

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angry! How important it is that we should do so, and lose any irritation or depression we may feel because circumstances have not gone as we would like them to, through the comforting communion of prayer to Yahweh, and through faith in placing our burdens upon Him.

**"Was not this my saying, when I was in my country?"** — He had reasoned the matter out carefully before leaving for Tarshish, and now felt that his conclusions had been vindicated by events.

**"Therefore"** — This was the reason for Jonah's action in fleeing to Tarshish. He was not vindictive against the Ninevites, but realised that they constituted the greatest threat to Israel, so that he could only view the continued existence of this mighty and brutal city with misgivings as to the future.

**"I know that thou art a gracious God"** — What a wonderful testimony the prophet gave to the character of the One whom he served: "Gracious, merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness, and forgiving of evil." This is portion of the character of Yahweh which was revealed to Moses, when he pleaded to be shown the Divine glory (Exod. 33:18-19). He was shown a partial manifestation of Divine glory, and the Divine Name was pronounced, together with the attributes connected therewith. These reveal two sides to the character of Yahweh: His "goodness and His severity" (Rom. 11:22). Jonah, however, made reference only to the "goodness" of God, and omitted to refer to His just demands that men should obey Him. There are two sides to Yahweh's character. The one is merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity and sin; the other is stern and unyielding, and "will by no means clear the guilty" (Exod. 34:6). His love and kindness greatly outweigh His anger, as the prophet knew. Yet men cannot presume upon His mercy, if they flout His authority. "I will be

sanctified in those who approach unto Me," He has declared.

It is common to view only one side of Yahweh's character; to see Him only as merciful and forgiving; or, on the other hand, to view Him as exclusively vengeful and unyielding. But true worshippers acknowledge a balanced view of complete goodness. He is kind, yet inflexible in the requirements of His law; loving and compassionate, yet terrible as a destroying fire against the rebellious and the guilty; forgiving towards offences, yet jealous of the dignity, the glory, and the supremacy of His Name. He is holy, and cannot look upon sin. He is wise, and cannot tolerate fools. He is true and faithful, and will destroy all the false and perfidious. He is just and true and perfect — at once the Fountain of love and vengeance; the Author of life and death; the Source of reviving mercy and consuming fire. He is eternal, unchangeable, unsearchable, infinite, glorious in power and majesty — the King immortal, the Possessor of heaven and earth, to whom alone is glory due (Exod. 20:6; Ps. 103:8-18; Heb. 12:29; Hab. 1:13; Ps. 5:5-6; Deut. 32:4, 39; Hos. 14: 4, 6; 1 Tim. 1:17; Ps. 145:3; Gen. 14:19; Ps. 115:1 — *The Christadelphian Instructor*.

Jonah said he "knew" Yahweh, and in doing so made reference to His attributes. His character, as expressed by the prophet, was "known" to the faithful who trusted in it. It was revealed to Moses (Exod. 34:6; Deut. 5:9-10), to David (Ps. 86:5), to Hosea (Ch. 11:8-9), to Joel (Ch. 2:13), to Micah (Ch. 7:18), to Nahum (Ch. 1:3), and through the teaching of these prophets, to all Israel. Israel, in turn, was called upon to manifest the characteristics of the One Whom they worshipped. They were required to be firm and unyielding when Divine principles were called in question, but they were to temper this with mercy and forgiveness as the need arose,

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3. Now therefore, O Yahweh, take I pray thee my life from me, — for it were better for me to die than to live.

All the acts of Divine mercy have been associated with manifestations of Divine severity. The salvation of Israel was only effected at the expense of Pharaoh's army; the preservation of the faithful minority within the nation was only possible by Divine judgment on guilty Jerusalem and Israel; the means of redemption for all humanity required the death of the Son of God. Some see only goodness, some see only severity, but where Yahweh is concerned the manifestation of one presupposes the fact of the other, though it may be hidden for a time.

This is shown by Jonah's experience. He mentioned and saw only the forgiving mercy of Yahweh; but Nahum took up these very words of Jonah, and recalled the other side of God's character. He added that God "will not at all acquit the wicked" (Nahum 1:3), and proceeded to pronounce a terrible judgment upon Nineveh. As Jonah typed the Lord Jesus at his first advent when the Lord displayed the mercy and goodness of the Father, Nahum did that of the second advent of the Lord, when he will pour out judgments upon the Gentiles, and the latter-day Assyrian in particular (see Micah 5:6).

### VERSE 3

**"It is better for me to die than to live"** — These words have been considered as resulting from the petulance of a narrow-minded bigot who did not want to preach salvation to Gentiles. But that was not so. Consider the facts of the matter. Jonah was a high-minded prophet; a man not only imbued with the hope of Israel, but the desire to faithfully serve Yahweh in truth. He could only view Assyria as a deadly enemy, and see in its preservation a threat to the success of his mission to revive and

preserve Israel. It must have rankled with him, too, that Nineveh would be saved by his personal instrumentality. It is natural for one who really cares for the things of God to which he may give his life without stint, to experience a depression of mind when events do not proceed in the way he feels would be best for the cause he has espoused. That was Jonah's feeling at this time. He believed that his life's work was ruined. He had labored in Israel during the period of Assyria's decline with partial success, but he knew that a revived Nineveh presented insurmountable obstacles to the complete spiritual revival of Israel. Like Moses who was ready to die for his people's sake (Exod. 32:14), and Elijah who fled before the anger of Jezebel after manifesting courage of the highest order in slaying the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 19:4), Jonah preferred death to life.

The experiences of life are made up of peaks and shadows. Moments of high resolve, or courageous action, are so frequently followed by fits of depression and human weakness that bring one almost to the brink of despair. Only by setting the mind completely upon the purpose of God in Christ, by acknowledging that we serve Him and not ourselves, by recognising that His ways and not ours are best, and by seeking the comfort, consolation and communion of Yahweh in prayer, will we be saved from the depression of our own passions. How frequently have depressed, hard-working servants of God confessed with Jonah: "It is better for me to die than to live!" Do not let us condemn a noble, self-sacrificing prophet for a moment of natural weakness. Yahweh did not, but patiently revealed to him His purpose and so lifted him out of his despair.

## **JONAH'S VIEWPOINT COMPARED WITH THE DIVINE PURPOSE**

Jonah did not reason from the standpoint of a narrow-minded bigoted Jew, who saw no hope for Gentiles, but from that of a patriot who desired the salvation of his people, and could see no good purpose in the preservation of a God-dishonoring and brutal nation of pagans. We present herewith his case and Yahweh's reply thereto as they can be argued from Scripture.

Jonah's viewpoint can be reasoned thus:

1. The preservation of Assyria could not be to the glory of Yahweh, and would be to the grievous hurt of Israel—therefore let it perish.

2. Salvation is of the Jews. Any repentance on the part of the Ninevites, therefore, would be only temporary and national, and could not bring individual salvation. Being of no permanent value, and only to the hurt of Israel, why revive Assyrian power?

3. Despite the seeming prosperity of Israel under Jeroboam, the nation was spiritually and politically weak, even though the prophet strove to strengthen the people. Thus punishment was inevitable, and he feared for the future of the nation. If Nineveh, the potential destroyer of Israel, were itself destroyed (and but forty days was the time limit for repentance), Israel would be granted an extension of time to effect the reform for which he hoped and labored.

4. Like Paul, Jonah was prepared "to be accursed" for the sake of his brethren if he could save them (Rom. 9:3), and had therefore fled being prepared to suffer the consequences.

5. Although Jonah realised the Kingdom of God would be set up ultimately in accordance with the covenants of promise (Acts 26:12), he did not comprehend that the Gospel must first be preached to the Gentiles (Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:3-6). This ignorance of the full purpose of Yahweh induced him to act as he did, and was partly the cause of his anger and disappointment.

On the other hand, Yahweh's case can be argued thus:

1. The words of Peter, consequent upon the vision he received, were: "God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean . . . Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him" (Acts 10:28, 34-35). This truth, plainly revealed to Peter at the time appointed, was also revealed to Jonah. He was given a preview of God's ultimate purpose in preaching, and should not have been angry at this confidence that Yahweh reposed in him.

2. Salvation is of the Jews, it is true, but as Paul was compelled to finally admit: "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28-29). In accepting the reproof of the God of Israel, the Ninevites were taking the first step to becoming Jews in this sense.

3. Yahweh used Jonah as a type of the coming Messiah to show that not merely Jews were to be saved, but Gentiles also. There were always Gentiles within Israel, such as the mixed multitude that left Egypt, or the Rechabites who lived as a separate community within the nation, obeying Yahweh more completely than

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did many Israelites after the flesh. Isaiah also declared: "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isa. 49:6). Jonah was privileged to be the medium of this manifestation to the people.

4. These matters were exhibited in "a sign," the "sign of the prophet Jonah," which also demonstrated that the current prosperity that Israel enjoyed in the days of the prophet could be as easily reduced as it had been advanced.

5. The Kingdom of God will be set up in its glory as predicted, but meanwhile Israel must be disciplined and humbled before it can find a place therein. Nineveh was the nation selected by God to do this, and therefore its continued preservation was required in accordance with Yahweh's purpose. The prophet was sent to warn the Ninevites to desist from their iniquity, and they having done so, the city was saved, not for its own glory, but to fulfil the Divine will. As a prophet, Jonah should have acknowledged that Yahweh would not require anything of him, that was not according to His purpose, and was not the best thing for Israel in the ultimate. Therefore the prophet should not have been angry; it did no good!

4. Then said Yahweh, Art thou rightly angry?

5. But Jonah went forth out of the city, and abode on the east side of the city; and made for himself there a hut and sat under it in the shade, until he should see what would become of the city.

### Yahweh Reproves Jonah — Vv. 4-11

*We reach the end of the drama in these verses. By the parables of the gourd, the worm, and the east wind, Jonah was educated in the Divine purpose. He was shown the folly of his anger which stemmed from ignorance, and was given a revelation of God's ways. Such knowledge will help us to rise above depression and reveal clearly for our guidance the Divine will and purpose.*

### VERSE 3

**"Doest thou well to be angry?"**

—Jonah felt that he did well to be angry, but then he was ignorant of the full purpose of Yahweh who had decreed that a time would come when His purpose would be preached to Gentiles. Similarly, the preaching of the Truth to Gentiles, caused anger in the early Ecclesia, among those who did not realise that the Divine purpose required it.

### VERSE 5

**"Jonah sat on the east side of the city"**—He would have approached the city from the west, so he must have travelled throughout it in the course of his preaching. He thoroughly fulfilled the instructions of Yahweh, and thus paid his vows.

**"Made him a booth"** — The word, in the Hebrew is *sukkah*, and is used of those temporary dwellings built by the Israelites at Succoth when they came out of Egypt and the booths erected at the Feast of Tabernacles, that recalled Yahweh's goodness to them in delivering them from the enemy (Lev. 23:41-44). The word implies a very temporary dwelling, quite unfit for shelter from the hot, burning sun which would beat down upon Jonah. But it was a significant dwelling, for it recalled the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths) which spake of Yahweh's goodness to Israel. It should have reminded Jonah of the Divine

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6. Now Yahweh God appointed a gourd and caused it to come up over Jonah that it might be a shade over his head, to deliver him from his vexation,—and Jonah rejoiced over the gourd with great rejoicing.
7. But God appointed a worm, at the uprisings of the dawn, the next day,—and it smote the gourd that it withered.

mercy and goodness in delivering Israel from Egypt, and the need to manifest similar mercy to others, but apparently it did not, for he sat there awaiting the fate of the city.

**“Till he might see what would become of the city”**—Evidently he traversed the city during the course of his preaching mission, and proceeded to the east of the city, to await the result of his preaching, and the effect of the Divine mercy on the city. Meanwhile, the people gave themselves up to acts of repentance, and Jonah could see that a reprieve would be granted it. So hot was his anger, that the vexed, indignant prophet sheltering under the shade of the inadequate booth hardly felt the heat of the blazing sun above.

### VERSE 6

**“God prepared a gourd”**—The specific plant thus described is unknown, and does not matter. Sufficient is it to know that it rapidly grew to provide the prophet with necessary and adequate shelter. Thus he experienced the mercy of Yahweh. But he had done nothing to deserve this; and had not even requested it. In that he was like the Ninevites! The gourd had grown up very quickly, and Jonah had been refreshed by its presence and the shade it afforded. He was “exceeding glad of the gourd,” as he was of Israel’s rising power at that time (2 Kings 14:25). But who had advanced Israel’s power? Was it Jonah? Was it Jeroboam? No, it was Yahweh! He had power both to raise up, and to cast down, as was indicated in the sudden growth and equally quick withering of the gourd. He had advanced Israel in spite of its stubbornness, as he had protected the

prophet with the gourd. He caused to grow. He had caused Jonah to rejoice in the protection it afforded, as the prophet had also rejoiced in the prosperity of his people; but Yahweh could as easily dry up Israel with a symbolic “east wind” (see Hos. 13:15), with or without the help of Nineveh, as He finally did the gourd. In spite of Israel’s political power at the time, and the influence of Jonah within the nation, Jeroboam II was a wicked king, and Israel a decadent nation doomed to punishment, as Amos proclaimed in the court of the king when he ascended there to proclaim Yahweh’s indictment against it because of its wickedness (Amos 7:7-17).

**“To deliver him from his grief”**—The mercy of Yahweh, in providing the gourd, gave the prophet some comfort in his vexatious irritability. This, however, was designed to teach him a spiritual lesson which would have completely stilled his grief.

### VERSE 7

**“God prepared a worm”**—Yahweh, in His mercy, had caused the gourd to grow, and in His wisdom, to teach the prophet a lesson, He destroyed it. The parable of the gourd revealed that Yahweh advances and retards men and nations in accordance with His purpose and wisdom; and through the prophet the lesson was later conveyed to Israel. Thus the Book of Jonah was preserved for posterity. Through it, the people were taught that as the protection Yahweh had afforded the nation had not resulted in their reformation, He would remove it. He had “prepared a worm” for that purpose, and Israel would be weakened from within; He had prepared a blighting wind, and Assyria would dry up the weakened nation

## PROPHECY OF JONAH

8. And it came to pass at the breaking forth of the sun that God appointed a sultry east wind, and the sun smote upon the head of Jonah that he became faint, — and asked his life that he might die, and said, It were better for me to die than to live.
9. Then said God unto Jonah, Art thou rightly angry over the gourd? And he said, I am rightly angry unto death.
10. Then said Yahweh, Thou wouldst have spared the gourd, for which thou hadst not toiled, neither hadst thou made it grow, — which as the off-spring of a night came up, and as the offspring of a night perished;

from without. Within about sixty years of the completion of Jeroboam's reign, Shalmaneser the Assyrian took the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity, and the parable of the gourd and the worm had had partial fulfilment.

### VERSE 8

**“God prepared a vehement east wind”**—The gourd, the worm, and the east wind were all prepared of Yahweh, even as the punishment Israel was to experience would be a work of God. Israel (represented by Jonah) had sheltered under the protection that Yahweh had provided, but He could as easily withdraw it, as He caused the gourd, eaten within by the worm, to wither before the hot, blighting east wind. The distress that Jonah felt when the protection was withdrawn would then be experienced by the nation, until, like Jonah, it would be caused to say: “It is better for us to die than to live” (cp. Deut. 28:67). The Book of Jonah, therefore, constituted first an exhortation to Israel to repent, and afterwards a sign of the work of Messiah. Meanwhile, as the booth that Jonah had erected did not provide adequate protection against the fierce rays of the sun that beat down upon him, no more would the might of Jeroboam provide sufficient protection against the rising power of Assyria which constituted Yahweh's rod to punish His people, as they had been already warned (Isa. 10:5-15).

Instead of “vehement,” the RV has “sultry.” The expression denotes a particularly scorching, destructive wind (cp. Gen. 41:23 Ezek. 17:10), which, perhaps, tore down Jonah's booth, so that the fierce,

hot rays of the sun beat down directly upon his head.

**“Wished in himself to die”**—The Hebrew, *shahel*, translated “wished,” signifies “to ask,” or “enquire.” So, literally, Jonah “asked for his life to die” (see Rotherham). He still acknowledged his dependence upon God, and in asking for death under the circumstances, perhaps had the request of Moses, made under similar conditions, in mind (Exod. 32:32).

### VERSE 9

**“Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?”**—The prophet might well reason from the destruction of the gourd, that Yahweh would withdraw His protective mercy from Israel by granting a reprieve to Assyria. So he replied, “I do well (have cause) to be angry, even unto death.” If he viewed the destruction of the gourd as a sign that Assyria was to be spared to punish Israel, one can well understand his anger.

### VERSE 10

**“Then said Yahweh”**—In these last two verses the whole experience of Jonah is summed up in such a way as to completely silence him. The book ends abruptly; but its very abruptness is thought-provoking, and seems designed to impress the lesson of the book on those who are prepared to heed it.

**“Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not labored”**—Jonah would have spared the gourd which had ministered to his comfort, but was not prepared to spare the Ninevites who had repented, and had given God honor. Thus he looked at



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11. And was not I to spare Nineveh, the great city,—wherein are more than twelve times ten thousand human beings who cannot discern between their right hand and their left, besides much cattle?

the problem of mercy and severity from a completely personal viewpoint. He would spare Israel whose wickedness deserved punishment; but not the Ninevites whose repentance was a reproach to unrepentant Israelites.

**“Which came up in a night, and perished in a night”** — Just as quickly as the gourd grew up, so it perished. Whilst it stood it was pleasant to Jonah, so that he would have spared it. But he was no more responsible for its growth than he was for the prosperity Israel then experienced, or the adversity Assyria had suffered. It is Yahweh Who advances and retards nations, and He does so in wisdom, and for His often hidden purpose. Like the pleasure he obtained from the shade of the gourd, Jonah rejoiced in the extension of Israel's power, but Yahweh, Who knew better what was best for all concerned, had appointed Nineveh to do it. Jonah had to recognise that there was wisdom and purpose in Yahweh's treatment of the gourd. He caused it to grow, to give the prophet shade; He caused it to wither, to teach Him a lesson. There is wisdom and purpose in all that Yahweh does, as the now silenced prophet realised.

### VERSE 11

**“Should not I spare Nineveh?”** —Of course He should—both for the salvation of souls, and for the punishment of Israel, which ultimately occurred at the hands of that nation (2 Kings 18:9). Nevertheless, once Nineveh had performed the pleasure of Yahweh, it, too, would be destroyed (Isa. 10:12). Meanwhile, it is for Yahweh's servants to recognise that “the long-suffering of God is salvation” (2 Pet. 3:15), and that He “does not do without cause all that He does” (Ezek. 14:23). The prophet had no counter to this question.

To pose it was to answer it!

**“More than sixscore thousand persons”**—The Hebrew, *ribbo* signifies twelve myriads. This is a significant number to select, as it naturally draws comparison with the twelve tribes (myriads) of Israel. Gentiles can become “of the commonwealth of Israel” (Eph. 2:11) by repentance and baptism into Christ Jesus, and the use of a word signifying “twelve myriads” seems to point to the fact that once Israel had cast off God, Yahweh would turn to the Gentiles, to “take out of them a people for His name” (Acts 15:14), and that the people so selected would constitute the twelve tribes of Israel in a spiritual sense (Eph. 2:11; Rev. 7). This symbolic significance could well be the reason why this number was selected, for, certainly, it is in accordance with the type as fulfilled by the Lord Jesus.

Why should the angel select children in assessing the population of mighty Nineveh? It seems that he was reminding Jonah that there was a large number in Nineveh of such tender age as to be as yet uninfluenced by the normal wickedness of the city, and therefore susceptible to the influence that the prophet's teaching might bring upon them.

**“That cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand”**—This description suggests very young children (Deut. 1:39), who might be guided into right ways, and moulded by Divine instruction. They were not responsible for the wickedness of the nation, and the reprieve granted the city would give them opportunity to repent. It has been assessed from this number of very young children that the population of the city could be approximately 600,000, but nothing definite can be arrived at from this figure. It depends upon what age is indicated in the expression used. No

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doubt, the population of the city was much larger than this figure would suggest.

**“And also much cattle”**—God’s mercy is over all His creation. He preserves both man and beast (Ps. 36:6; 145:9). If His care extends to the brute creation, He is certainly concerned with the

future of man who is made in His image. A nation must justify the Divine displeasure before Yahweh, who is a God of love, will punish it (Gen. 15:16), for He is merciful, as Jonah had already acknowledged (Jon. 4:2).

Jonah, like Job before him, was effectively silenced by Divine wisdom.

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## Summary

The remarkable experiences of Jonah were recorded and included in the Hebrew canon of Scripture, to set before the people a compelling message of exhortation and warning. Rightly considered, the book should have taught the people of Israel that they could not rest on the fact that they were the promised nation, for as easily as Yahweh caused the gourd first to grow and then to wither, so He could and would punish His people.

It also set forth in parabolic, prophetic form the mission of the coming Messiah, the ideal Israelite. The outpouring of the spirit in the form of a Dove, the declaration of the Lord that he comprised the antitypical Jonah, should have directed the people to the Book of Jonah, and caused the spiritually minded among them to see a little further into the Divine purpose. But they were so blind, that some of their leaders and teachers declared: “Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet” (John 7:52). However, Jonah was a Galilean. Perhaps they meant, no prophet in Judah. But whatever they meant, these leaders were self-deceived as to the position and mission of the Lord (John 3:2).

Led by such blind leaders of the blind, the people refused to heed the sign of the prophet Jonah, and became involved in a calamity similar to that which was threatened against the Ninevites. Thus Jonah’s experiences set forth the ways of Providence, with particular emphasis on His wondrous longsuffering, in which is discovered salvation.

From the record of Jonah, we naturally turn to the prophecy of Nahum who revealed that God is not mocked, and that He is just in His mercy and holiness, and will by no means acquit the guilty. Jonah the Dove and Nahum the Comforter both typed Christ but the former in relation to his first advent, and the latter in relation to his second advent; the former as the Lamb, the latter as the Lion.

# *Nahum Tolls the Death-Knell over Nineveh*

A Verse by Verse Exposition of

**THE PROPHECY OF NAHUM**



# Nahum: The Comforter

## A Sequel To Jonah.

The message of Nahum provides a sequel to that of Jonah who had ministered to Israel some 150 years earlier. Jonah proclaimed a message of mercy and repentance; Nahum, one of indictment and doom.

Together, their messages illustrate Yahweh's way of dealing with sin. He prolongs the day of grace, but in the end He visits punishment upon iniquity.

Thus Jonah preached forgiveness, and Nahum proclaimed judgment. Jonah did so on the grounds that "Yahweh is slow to anger" (Jonah 4:2), and Nahum did so because Yahweh is "a jealous God" (Nah. 1:2).

Nahum's indictment, following on Jonah's appeal, reveals that wrath restrained is but wrath reserved.

Nahum commenced where Jonah finished. Jonah had declared that Yahweh is "a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest of the evil" (Jonah 4:2). Nahum acknowledged that Yahweh is "slow to anger," but adds that He will "not acquit the wicked" (Nahum 1:3). Between them they reveal the two-fold character of Yahweh: His "goodness and severity" (Rom. 11:22), as it is revealed in the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

The two-fold character of Yahweh, as exhibited in the joint-preaching of Jonah and Nahum, was first proclaimed to Moses (Exod. 34:6-7) in the following terms:

### JONAH

"Merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."

### NAHUM

"That will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me." (Deut. 5: 9-10.)

This two-fold aspect of the Divine character, is seen in every incident of Israel's history where Yahweh has manifested Himself. The deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea revealed His merciful, loving kindness to the nation; but, at the same time, His severity was manifested in "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" of Egypt. His destruction of the Jewish State demonstrated that He will "by no means clear the guilty;" but, at the same time, His careful discrimination between the righteous and wicked within the nation, and His deliverance and protection of the former, as the history of Daniel and others show, reveal that He is both just and merciful. The destruction of guilty Judea in A.D. 70 was a revela-

tion of the "severity" of Yahweh, but "goodness" was at the same time extended to the Christians who were granted opportunity to flee to Pella.

So the "goodness and severity" of Yahweh has always been magnified, and the appeal has ever been to His people to seek His goodness.

The first and second advents of the Lord Jesus exhibit this twofold aspect of the Divine character. He came first, as the Lamb of God for the salvation of the world, and as such, he exhibited mercy, graciousness, longsuffering, and forgiveness. He comes again as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to rend those who hate Yahweh, and pour out upon a guilty world the judgment written.

As Jonah prefigured the work of Christ at his first coming; so Nahum foreshadowed his work at his second coming.

These two short books, therefore, supplement each other, and in a very dramatic and wonderful manner, set forth a balanced view of the Divine character, and the work of Yahweh through His Son at his two advents.

### A Type Of Christ.

Both Jonah and Nahum, therefore, are types of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jonah, who preached repentance to the Ninevites, foreshadowed the Lord as Savior and Redeemer, such as he appeared before men at his first advent. Nahum, who proclaimed judgment against the Ninevites, depicted his work at his second coming.

Nahum's name means "*The Comforter*", and this provides an epitome of his message, for though it is one of destruction and doom to Nineveh, it is one of relief to oppressed Israel.

In *Eureka*, Brother Thomas has epitomised the comforting message of this book, by summarising it in similar terms as the following:

Nahum saw Israel oppressed by Nineveh; and predicted its overthrow, because its monarch was wicked, and imagined evil against Yahweh. But Israel's deliverance from the Assyrian by the fall of Nineveh was only the type of a greater deliverance at the apocalypse of Messiah. The prophet Micah, therefore, looking forward to this, says:

"This man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men, and they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders" (Micah 5:5-6).

Micah here likens the Gogian confederacy to the Assyrian

in the land, and predicts that Christ shall destroy its power completely.

Nahum saw Nineveh in a similar light, for he declared:

**"Behold upon the mountains the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows; for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off" (Ch. 1:15).**

This describes the condition that shall come to Judah consequent upon the destruction of Nineveh, and as this is yet in the future, the prophecy of Nahum concerning the destruction of Nineveh has a double application: it primarily related to historic Nineveh of the past, but it also relates to the Nineveh yet to be destroyed by Christ at his coming as shown in Micah's prophecy.

### **Babylon And Nineveh As Types.**

A comparison of the prophecies of the Old Testament relating to historic Babylon, and those of the New Testament concerning mystical Babylon, reveals that the destruction of the former foreshadowed that of the latter.

The language of Jeremiah 51 is very similar to that of Revelation 18.

The former predicts the complete and final overthrow of historic Babylon; the latter describes the utter destruction of mystical Babylon.

Babylon of the past, therefore, was a type of the political-religious order of European Catholicism, with its headquarters in Rome.

What of Nineveh?

The reference in Micah 5:5-6, quoted above, shows that Nineveh foreshadowed the military power of the latter-day Gog, to be overthrown by Christ, who will then invade his territory.

Nineveh was destroyed before Babylon, and Gog will be overthrown before the Catholic confederacy of Europe will be overcome by the invading forces of Christ's army (Zech. 9:13-17).

Further, Babylon was subject to the Assyrian power at the epoch of its destruction, and when the latter day "Assyrian" marches into the land of Judah at the time of the end (Mic. 5:5-6), like his ancient counterpart, he will have confederated modern Babylon, or Catholic Europe, within his power.

In the light of this type and anti-type, Nahum's description of Nineveh's fall, has a very pointed application today.

## The Man Nahum.

All that we know of Nahum is recorded in his book, and the details are very scanty.

He is described as "the Elkoshite." It is presumed (but is by no means certain), that Elkosh was in Galilee, and the ruins of El-Kauzeh in Naphtali are supposed by some to be those of Elkosh. If he were of Galilee, he doubtless migrated to Judah, for his words of comfort are directed to the people of Judah (Ch. 1:15). Perhaps when the Assyrian Esarhaddon re-populated the northern province with a mixed people after the deportation of the ten tribes (2 Kings 17:5-6, 24), Nahum may have migrated south. This, however, is conjecture. What is certain is that he addresses Judah.

The name of the prophet is preserved in the name of the town that the Lord Jesus so much frequented: the Village of Capernaum, for Capernaum signifies the Village of Nahum, or of Consolation.

The Lord was so closely associated with Capernaum, that it is styled "his own city" in the Gospel record (cp. Mark 2:1 with Matt. 9:1). It is rather significant, in view of our joint consideration of the prophets Jonah and Nahum, that the Holy Spirit should come upon Jesus in the form of a Jonah (a Dove) at the commencement of his public ministry, and that he identified himself with the sign of Jonah; and that also he should be closely connected with the village of Nahum, or Capernaum! These hints should have caused his followers to study those two small books of the Old Testament, to obtain a better conception of who the Lord was, and what was his mission.

From Nahum 3:8, it is obvious that he prophesied after the destruction of Thebes in Egypt. This was brought about by Assurbanipal of Assyria approximately B.C. 665. Nahum, therefore, would have been a contemporary of Manasseh whose reign was followed by the short one of Amon, and the longer one of "good king Josiah." His ministry was some time before that of Zephaniah, who also predicted the complete and utter overthrow of Nineveh.

In the Hebrew, Nahum's book is set forth in poetic style. One writer has described his style in the following terms:

*"Nahum forms a beautiful, vivid, pictorial poem on the grandeur, power and justice of God, and on the conflict between Yahweh and the cruel, defiant world empire of Nineveh. None of the minor prophets seem to equal Nahum in boldness, ardour and sublimity. His prophecy forms a regular and perfect poem; the exordium is not merely magnificent, it is truly majestic; the preparation for the destruction of Nineveh, and the description of its downfall and desolation, are expressed in the most vivid colors, and are bold and luminous in the highest degree."*

Nahum's book is a vivid, descriptive book of action, writ-

ten by a true patriot of Zion. He rejoiced in the overthrow of a brutal, violent enemy, and saw it as the triumph of righteousness over evil, of light over darkness, of Zion over Nineveh, of the things of the spirit over those of the flesh politically manifested. No true son of Zion can read the book unmoved. He must rejoice in anticipation of the destruction of Gentile darkness as he foresees the time when "upon the mountains" will be seen "the feet of him (Christ) that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!" (Nahum 1:15.) May that day soon come.

### THE REJOICING CITY — A DESOLATION

Far away from the highways of modern commerce, and the tracks of ordinary travel, lay a city buried in the sandy earth of a half-desert Turkish province, with no certain trace of its place of sepulchre. Vague tradition said that it was hidden somewhere near the river Tigris; but for a long series of ages its known existence was a mere name — a word. That name suggested the idea of an ancient capital of fabulous splendor and magnitude, vast, but scarcely real: "the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly; that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me;" and which was to become "a desolation and dry like a wilderness."

More than two thousand years had it lain in its unknown grave, when a French savant and a wandering English scholar, urged by a noble inspiration, sought the seat of the once powerful empire, and searching till they found the dead city, threw off its shroud of sand and ruin, and revealed once more to an astonished and curious world the temples, the palaces and idols. The Nineveh of Scripture, the Nineveh of the oldest historians — glorying in a civilisation of pomp and power, all traces of which were believed to be gone. The proofs of ancient splendor were again beheld by living eyes, and, by the skill of draftsmen and the pen of antiquarian travellers, made known and preserved to the world .

(From *Nineveh and its Palaces* by Bonomi.)



# Analysis of the Book of Nahum

The book has but one theme: the destruction of Nineveh. Obviously the repentance of the Ninevites at the preaching of Jonah had not been lasting, the brutal Assyrian kings had marched against Israel, blaspheming Yahweh (2 Kings 18:25, 30, 35), and the northern Kingdom had fallen. Subsequently Rab-shakeh, on behalf of Sennacherib, challenged Judah and Yahweh in the name of the gods of Assyria. He declared to the people: "Hearken not unto Hezekiah when he persuadeth you, saying, Yahweh will deliver us!" (2 Kings 18:32). Boldly he continued to blaspheme, declaring that Yahweh had not the power to deliver from the might of Assyria (v. 35).

Yahweh accepted the challenge (2 Kings 19:22-23), and Sennacherib was overthrown by the angel of death. In the dramatic overthrow of Sennacherib's forces there was foreshadowed the coming destruction of Gog. Later this became the theme of Nahum who predicted that Nineveh would perish in as violent and complete a way, as she in her brutality and cruelty had brought other nations to their doom. Nahum's book constitutes a prophetic sigh of relief that at last the vile persecutor of humanity would be brought to an end! To epitomise the theme of the prophecy we select the following title:

## **NAHUM TOLLS THE DEATH-KNELL OVER NINEVEH!**

The theme is expressed in Ch. 1:3, 14: "Yahweh will not at all acquit the guilty," and "I will make thy grave; for thou art vile."

The three chapters conveniently set forth the three sections of his theme.

### **CHAPTER 1 — NINEVEH'S DOOM DECLARED**

The character of Nineveh's Judge .....	vv. 1-8.
The Declaration of Nineveh's doom .....	vv. 9-11.
The Proclamation of Comfort to Nineveh's Oppressed ..	vv. 12-15.

### **CHAPTER 2 — NINEVEH'S DOOM DESCRIBED**

The city besieged .....	vv. 1-5.
The city overwhelmed .....	vv. 6-10.
The city made desolate .....	vv. 11-13.

### **CHAPTER 3 — NINEVEH'S DOOM DESERVED**

The cause of the overthrow .....	vv. 1-5.
The lesson of the overthrow .....	vv. 6-13.
The certainty of the overthrow .....	vv. 14-19.

# CHAPTER 1

## Nineveh's Doom Declared

*The character of Yahweh, the Divine Judge of Nineveh, is such that He cannot for ever tolerate injustice, blasphemy and cruel oppression. He is kind and merciful, and desires not the death of any, but He is also just, and will not acquit the guilty. There is comfort and assurance in that fact, and Nahum the Comforter set it forth for all to learn and profit by.*

*Yahweh is not only merciful yet just, but of great power. None can stand before Him: not even mighty Nineveh, then the earth's most powerful and brutal Empire. Because of His power, Yahweh is a stronghold to those who shelter under His protective care. On the basis of his character the grounds of mercy, justice and power, the doom of Nineveh was pronounced. In it was seen the severity of Yahweh, but also His goodness to those prepared to hearken to the Gospel, or the good tidings proclaimed upon the mountains of the holy land. Thus on the one hand, Nahum proclaimed Yahweh's declaration of war; and on the other hand His offer of peace. And people were called upon to "Behold the goodness and severity of God" (Rom. 11:22).*

*The very nation against which Nahum now pronounced his message of doom was that which had experienced the Divine goodness under Jonah. So Paul draws out the exhortation for us to heed: "Towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." As Rotherham comments: "Out of the full-orbed perfection of Yahweh comes the twofold manifestation, designed to alarm His foes and assure His friends."*

*This is shown in the chapter before us. The Character of Nineveh's Judge is revealed to be both just and merciful (vv. 1-8), and the working out of these attributes is revealed in both the judgments proclaimed against Nineveh (vv. 9-11), and the mercy ensured towards Judah (vv. 12-15).*

*From this we can conclude that God has not ceased to guide those who fear Him, or to use the chastening rod when love and justice require it. The coming age will see His complete goodness which will heal all hearts and dry all tears.*

## PROPHECY OF NAHUM

### CHAPTER 1

1. The oracle on Nineveh, — the scroll of the vision of Nahum, the Elkoshite.
2. A God jealous and avenging is Yahweh,  
An avenger is Yahweh, and a lord of wrath,  
An avenger is Yahweh towards His adversaries,  
And a retainer (of anger) is He to His foes.
3. Yahweh is slow to anger, but great in vigor,  
He will not leave unpunished, —  
As for Yahweh in storm-wind and in tempest is His way,  
And clouds are the dust of His feet.
4. Who rebuketh the sea, and hath made it dry,  
And all the streams hath He dried up,  
Withered are Bashan and Carmel,  
Even the bloom of Lebanon is withered:
5. Mountains have trembled because of him,  
and the hills have melted, —  
and the earth hath lifted itself up at his presence,  
The world also, and all who dwell therein.
6. Before his indignation who shall stand?  
And who shall abide the glow of his anger?  
His wrath hath been poured forth like fire,  
And the rocks have been broken down because of him.
7. Good is Yahweh, as a protection in the day of distress, —  
And one who acknowledgeth them who seek refuge in him.
8. But with an overflow rolling on a full end will he make of them who rise up against him, —  
And his foes will he pursue into darkness.
9. What can ye devise against Yahweh?  
A full end is he making, —  
Distress shall not rise up twice!
10. Though they were like thorns intertwined,  
And as drunkards drenched with their drink  
Yet have they been devoured, like stubble fully dry.
11. Out of thee hath one come forth —  
Plotting, against Yahweh, wickedness, —  
A counsellor of the Abandoned One.
12. Thus saith Yahweh,  
Though they be in full force,  
And so in great numbers,  
Yet even so have they been cut off and have passed away, —  
If I humble thee once  
I will not humble thee again.
13. Now therefore will I break his yoke from off thee,  
And thy fetters will I tear off.
14. Then will Yahweh give command concerning thee,  
None of thy name shall be sown any more, —  
Out of the house of thy gods will I cut off carved image and molten image  
I will appoint thy grave,  
For thou art of little esteem.
15. Lo! upon the mountains  
The feet of one, who bringeth Good Tidings  
who publisheth Prosperity!  
Celebrate, O Judah, thy pilgrim festivals,  
Fulfil thy vows,  
For not again any more shall the Abandoned One pass through thee,  
He hath been wholly cut off.

### The Character of Nineveh's Judge — Vv.1-8

*The glory of Yahweh is manifested in His just wrath against His enemies, His merciful kindness to His people, and His majesty and power in both (cp. Exod. 34: 6-7).*

### VERSE 1

**"The burden"** — The Hebrew word is *Massa*, and signifies "to lift," "to raise up," and hence something which is heavy or burdensome, something weighty and depressing. Thus a weighty, threat-

ening prophecy (Hab. 1:1).

**"Nineveh"**—The reformation affected by the preaching of Jonah 150 years before had been only superficial. The long-suffering of Yahweh was now at an end, and Assyria having fulfilled His purpose in taking the ten tribes into captivity, was about to be punished for her sins. Yahweh was perfectly just in punishing Assyria, even though the brutal nation had fulfilled His purpose, for as He revealed to Isaiah (see Isa. 10:5-16), in all that Assyria had done, the nation had not been actuated

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by motives other than its own selfish aggrandisement.

**"The book of the vision"**—Nahum saw in vision what he records, and thus presents it with all the vigor of a personal eye witness. See the use of the expression in Isaiah 1:1; cp. Ch. 2:1.

### VERSE 2

**"God is jealous"**—The margin renders this better as: "Yahweh is a jealous God, and a revenger, etc." The word "God" is *El*, and signifies power, strength, and might. It defines God as outstandingly mighty and as such, able to vindicate Himself. He is jealous, that is, He will not share the love due to Him with others. He requires of us that we render to Him, undivided loyalty and love, seeking to please Him in all the ways of life. As a jealous *El*, He is ready to defend His honor against all who oppose Him, or to move for the protection of those who trust Him. The word "jealous" comes from a Hebrew root, signifying, to flush up red. The term indicates that Yahweh is not unmoved by the circumstances of life in which His sons find themselves, or by the oppression they receive from the ungodly.

**"Yahweh revengeth"** — Rotherham renders this as "avengeth." He will avenge His own. We manifest faith in Him when we leave it to Him to do so (Rom. 12:19).

**"And is furious"**—In the Hebrew this is literally rendered: "A Master of fury." Rotherham renders it: "a lord of wrath." Yahweh controls and commands fury, restraining or releasing it when necessary. It was restrained, as far as Nineveh was concerned, through the repentance of the people consequent upon the preaching of Jonah; it was later unleashed by Yahweh, as predicted by Nahum, because the people reverted to their evil ways.

**"He reserveth wrath"**—At the time Nahum spoke, Assyria was enjoying a period of great prosperity.

An extension of political existence had been granted the nation consequent upon the repentance of the people through the preaching of Jonah, but they had long forgotten his warning message. Jonah revealed that Yahweh's wrath against Nineveh would be restrained, but Nahum showed that it was still held in reserve, and because of the sin of the nation it would be poured out despite the current prosperity. In complete conformity with his prediction, Nineveh fell within a comparatively short time of Nahum's prophecy. To Israel it must have seemed as though Yahweh had hidden His face during the period of Assyrian prosperity and triumph, but those who exercised true faith and patience, placed their confidence in Him, and were rewarded when He avenged them by destroying their deadly enemy.

### VERSE 3

**"Yahweh is slow to anger"**—These words are cited from Exodus 34:6-7 where the two-fold aspect of the Divine character is described. They were words that Jonah used in complaint (Jonah 4:2), because he desired to see the destruction of Israel's ancient enemy, Assyria. There is both a comfort and a threat in the statement that Yahweh is slow to anger. It reveals that He is not hasty in judgment, and will give opportunity for people to repent; but, at the same time, it shows that mankind can not presume, merely because Yahweh does not move quickly to punish wickedness. Two passages of Scripture come to mind in view of this aspect of the Divine character. The first one reveals the foolish presumption of flesh: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecc. 8:11); the second one shows the purpose of delay: "The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing..." (1 Pet. 3:20. See also

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2 Pet. 3:15). Yahweh is "slow to anger," to enable those who will, to seek the salvation that He ever extends to men.

**"And great in power"**—Rotherham renders the conjunction as "but." The fact that Yahweh is "slow to anger" should never be misinterpreted as weakness or as lack of power to punish and avenge. He is longsuffering, not through weakness, but because He has the power both to redeem and to destroy, and therefore can bide His time to do either. There is always a reason why Yahweh does not make His presence known, though we may not know what it is.

**"And will not at all acquit"**—He will not treat the guilty as innocent. This is a characteristic we should likewise practise, if we would manifest the Divine attribute (Psalm 15:4).

**"Yahweh hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm"**—The mighty forces of nature are His to command (see Ps. 148:8; 107:25). This statement of fact was most applicable to Nineveh, for it had already been dramatically illustrated in the sudden and complete overthrow of Sennacherib's forces outside Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:35). Whirlwind and storm illustrate the Divine power. The whirlwind rises suddenly and is irresistible in power; like Yahweh's judgments. A mighty storm defies all human devices of protection in its destructive force; so Yahweh's power is likewise irresistible.

**"The clouds are the dust of His feet"**—Vast and majestic as the clouds may appear unto us, Yahweh is so much higher as to liken them to the dust of His feet. The allusion is to a chariot and horses (the cherubic chariot — 2 Kings 6:17) travelling rapidly, and enveloped in clouds of dust. It relates specifically to Yahweh in belligerent manifestation figuratively travelling rapidly through the heavens, throwing up this cloudy dust as He rides furiously

in His anger, and so blotting out the light of the sun.

### VERSE 4

**"He rebuketh the sea and maketh it dry"**—Yahweh's punishment of Egypt at the Red Sea is history's warning to all oppressors of Israel (Ps. 106:9; Jer. 32:20) and as such constituted a dire threat to Assyria. Christ literally manifested this Divine power over the stormy elements (Luke 8:24).

**"And drieth up all the rivers"**—The miracle of the Jordan exhibited this. As the Psalmist showed (Ps. 107:33), this revealed Yahweh's omnipotence (Isa. 50:2). The two great rivers of antiquity were the Nile and the Euphrates (Isa. 27:12-13). The Nile representing Egypt, had already been figuratively dried up (Nah. 3:8), and the Assyrian power was about to follow suit. It is likened to a river overflowing its banks. Isaiah declared: "Behold, the Lord bringeth up . . . the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory" (Isa. 8:7). This political river was about to be smitten, and its water dried up, as Nahum revealed.

**"Bashan languisheth"**—According to *The English and Hebrew Bible Students' Concordance*, the word "Bashan" signifies "fertile." As such, it is descriptive of the region, for it is noted as one of the most fertile districts of the Holy Land. It has been said of it, that the scenery of this elevated tract is extremely beautiful; its plains covered with fertile soil; its hills crowned with thick forests, and at every new turn presenting the most beautiful landscapes imaginable. Nahum described it as languishing. He mentions also Carmel and Lebanon, because with Bashan, they geographically represented Israel's borders to the west, east and north. All this region of the Holy Land had been brought low by the overthrow of the northern kingdom at the hands of Assyria (Isa. 33:9). Bashan is east of the River Jordan.

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**“Carmel”** — Carmel signifies a “fruitful field.” It is an elegant mountain, jutting out into the Mediterranean, and commanding an impressive view of sea and land. It was the site of Elijah’s contest with the priests of Baal, and a dominant feature of the northern kingdom.

**“The flower of Lebanon languisheth”** — Lebanon signifies “white,” probably because of the snows that grace its summit. The Lebanese range, is a double range of mountains to the far north of the land of Israel, providing the northern gateway to the promised inheritance. All these mountains to the north of the land are represented as languishing because the Assyrian had brought the northern kingdom to an end.

### VERSE 5

**“The mountains quake at him”** —Mountains are used in Scripture as symbols of stability and permanency (Amos 4:13; Ps. 65:6). Thus, mountains quaking represent nations shaken by adversity. See Jer. 4:23-28; Isa. 24:19; Deut. 32:1, 21-23.

**“The earth is burned at his presence”**—Rotherham renders this as “The earth hath lifted itself up at his presence.” The instability of the earth suffering from an earthquake, is used by Isaiah to describe the overthrow of Judah (Isa. 24:19), and the same figure is here used to illustrate the reverses suffered by the northern kingdom. It had experienced a political earthquake which had completely overwhelmed it.

**“The world and all that dwell therein”**—A further reference to the political order of the northern kingdom. The language is similar to that used by Peter to describe the overthrow of Judah’s commonwealth in A.D.70 (2 Pet. 3), showing that his language is figurative as well.

### VERSE 6

**“Who can stand before his in-**

**ignation?”**—This question is asked in relation to the time when Yahweh’s judgments are manifested, and the answer is, Certainly not the wicked (Ps. 76:7; Ps. 1:5).

**“Who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?”**—The answer to this is: only the righteous (Isa. 33:14). See a similar question asked by Malachi in relation to the second coming of the Lord (Mal. 3:2).

**“His fury is poured out like fire”**—Moses warned Israel that Yahweh is “a consuming fire” (Deut 4:24). As such, He purges by fire the evil manifest in His creation. Thus Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by brimstone and fire (Gen. 19:24), the Jewish state in A.D.70 was overwhelmed “as by fire” and the Gentile heavens and earth of today are to be similarly consumed (2 Pet. 3).

**“The rocks are thrown down by him”**—This figurative language is used to describe the result of whirlwind (v.3) and earthquake (v.4) referred to earlier. Nahum advanced three terrifying manifestations of Divine power by which Yahweh overwhelms the guilty: storm (v.3), earthquake (v.4), and fire (v.6). This is a repetition, in exactly the same order, of those manifestations of destructive power which were shown to Elijah when he fled from Jezebel (1 Kings 19:11-12). The “strong wind, earthquake, and fire” which he there felt and saw, and which caused him to fear and seek a hidingplace, symbolised his stern ministry which had caused seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal to hide themselves in fear. But these manifestations of destructive power were followed by the still, small voice of Yahweh with its message of comfort, and this brought Elijah out of his hiding-place, and allayed his fear. He was sent back with a message of comfort to the seven thousand in Israel, to bring them out of their hiding-places, and rally their support, that they might testify with him in support of truth. In similar manner, Na-

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hum passed from the awe-inspiring judgments that would bring mighty nations crashing to ruin, to proclaim the comforting, quiet message that "Yahweh is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble." Meanwhile, however, he warned Judah of the terrifying judgments of Yahweh, which would so shake the political world as to shake things of normal stability out of their place. He describes this as mighty rocks being thrown down, or, literally, "torn asunder" by His strength. The significance of the expression he used is described by Jeremiah: "Is not My word like as a fire? saith Yahweh; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:29). Yahweh's word is powerful, and needs to be feared and heeded by those who would please Him (Heb. 4:12).

### VERSE 7

**"Yahweh is good"**—His goodness and mercy is particularly exhibited in what He does for sinners (Ps. 25:8; Rom. 2:4; 5:8). Nineveh had experienced mercy in the reprieve granted it following the preaching of Jonah; mankind generally does so in the Gospel. In it is revealed the "goodness of God" (Rom. 11:22). That goodness, or Gospel, was explained to Jethro (Exod. 18:9), made known to Moses (Exod. 33:19), promised to Hobab (Num. 10:29), hoped for by David (Ps. 27:13), set forth as the heritage of the elect by the Psalmist (Ps. 65:4), and will be granted the poor in spirit (Ps. 68:10). It is to be manifested particularly towards Israel (Isa. 63:7; Jer. 31:12); the saints are to be satiated with it (Jer. 31:14); the whole world is to witness its effect (Jer. 33:9), and it is destined to become the subject of millennial songs of victory (Zech. 9:17).

**"A strong hold in the days of trouble"**—Yahweh is a defence. When confidence is placed in Him, and men lean on His strength, they lay hold of a Source of power that is greater than flesh (see Ps. 27:1). Wisdom acknowledges that "the

name of Yahweh is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov. 18:10). Though it is not generally recognised now, the time is coming when all the world will realise this, for men shall see it exhibited in the redemption of His people (Jer. 16:19). But what does such a phrase mean in terms of concrete reality? It means that a person comprehends that there is real power in seeking to draw God into his life, and that in faith, he will do what Yahweh requires of him (even though this might result in temporary reversal), recognising that He will avenge him (Rom. 12:19). As Yahweh defended Israel in the past when the people obeyed His laws, so He will His people today. No weapon forged against them will prosper in the final analysis, for He will be their vindication (Isa. 54:17).

**"He knoweth them that trust in him"**—Rotherham renders this: "He acknowledges them..." He will take heed of them, and will protect them unto the future. See Ps. 1:6; 37:18; 2 Tim. 2:19.

### VERSE 8

**"With an overrunning flood He will make an utter end"**—A flood of water is used figuratively of an invading army (Isa. 8:7; Dan. 11:26, 40), and such a "flood" was used to destroy Nineveh. However, the figure is based upon the literal in this case, for the city was partly destroyed by a literal flood of water (see Nahum 2:6).

**"Of the place thereof"**—By "the place" is meant Nineveh. However, Rotherham, following the Septuagint and the Chaldee, renders: "A full end will he make of those who rise up against him." This rendition relates the subject to Yahweh, and shows how He will expend vengeance upon His enemies.

**"And darkness shall pursue his enemies"**—Rotherham renders: "And his foes will he pursue into darkness." This is a reference to the final obscurity and end of Assyria, then the most powerful nation on

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earth, but finally completely obliterated so that the very memory of it was forgotten.

### **A Declaration of Nineveh's Doom** — Vv. 9-11

*The complete and utter destruction of Nineveh is now pronounced. The fact that so large and powerful a city was brought to such an ignoble end as to completely fade out of the very memory of mankind, is an outstanding illustration of Yahweh's incomparable power.*

### **VERSE 9**

**"What do ye imagine against Yahweh?"**—How can flesh successfully contend against Yahweh? It is impossible. In every situation He will vindicate Himself ultimately, though in His wisdom this may be delayed. Faith will enable His servants to wait patiently for Him to manifest Himself. However, Nahum's statement has been rendered: "What think ye of Yahweh?" as though addressed to the doubters in both Judah and Assyria. To the former, the answer is that Yahweh will not permit His people to be persecuted with impunity but will redeem them; and to the latter it is that He will bring powerful, oppressing Assyria to an end despite its strength. Prov. 21:30; Isa. 10:5-16.

**"He will make an utter end"**—The statement of v. 8 is repeated for the sake of emphasis, to show that the prophecy is sure and will most certainly be fulfilled (see Gen. 41:32).

**"Affliction shall not rise up the second time"** — Affliction is personified like a powerful oppressor who will perform his work once and for all the first time.

### **VERSE 10**

**"For while they"** — the reference is to the Assyrians.

**"Be folden together as thorns"** — Thorns are only worthy of destruction (Heb. 6:8), though, whilst they are hardy and flourishing,

they cannot be taken by hands (2 Sam. 23:6-7). What flesh cannot accomplish, however, Yahweh most certainly can!

**"While they are drunken as drunkards"** — The R.V. renders this: "Be drenched as it were in their drink." Intoxicating liquor is often used figuratively for doctrine or propaganda (cp. Rev. 18:3) and with the aid of such means, in the name of its gods, Assyria fought and established its power (Isa. 36:18-22). Drunken by such a dogma, its rulers made the fatal mistake of challenging Yahweh, and were destroyed. However, Nahum's words seem to have a twofold application, for, according to the historian Diodorus, after the enemy had been thrice repulsed from Nineveh, the King of Assyria was so elated, that he gave himself up to the most abandoned festivity, and permitted his army to indulge in the greatest debauchery. In the midst of such revelry, when his fighting men were rendered largely helpless, the city was surprised and taken by Cyaxeres and the Medes.

Diodorus Siculus relates: "That it was while all the Assyrian army were feasting for their former victories, that those about Arbaces, being informed by some deserters, of the negligence and drunkenness in the camp of the enemies, assaulted them unexpectedly at night, and falling orderly on them disorderly, and prepared on them unprepared, became masters of the camp, and slew many of the soldiers and drove the rest into the city" (lib. 2).

Diodorus further relates: "There was an old prophecy, that Nineveh should not be taken, till the river became an enemy to the city: and in the third year of the siege, the river, being swollen with continued rains, overflowed part of the city, and broke down the wall for twenty furlongs; then the king, thinking the oracle was fulfilled, and the river become an enemy to the city, built a large funeral pile in the palace, and



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collecting together all his wealth, and his concubines, and eunuchs, burnt himself and his palace with them all; and the enemy entered at the breach that the waters had made, and took the city" (lib. 2).

**"Shall be devoured as stubble fully dry"** — Stubble fully dry is worthless refuse, and is easily and quickly consumed.

### VERSE 11

**"There is one come out of thee"**

— The one referred to was Sennacherib whose impiety was typical of the general impiety of the Assyrian kings, and whose doom not only foreshadowed that of the whole nation, but also typified the destruction to be poured out upon the Assyrian of the last days. Though Sennacherib's dramatic defeat and ignoble end was already history by the time Nahum prophesied, the prophet drew attention to this well-known world-shaking incident to point the lesson of Yahweh's purpose, not only in regard to Assyria of the past, but also concerning the Gogian-Assyrian of the last days.

**"That imagineth evil against Yahweh"** — This Rab-shakeh did on behalf of Sennacherib when he blasphemed Yahweh, and attacked Jerusalem. He initiated a holy war by claiming that the God of Israel had not the power to withstand the might of Assyria (2 Kings 18:28-35). This impious boast will be repeated by Gog when, in conjunction with Catholicism, he will invade the holy land, and advance against Jerusalem, in fulfilment of Ezekiel 38.

**"A wicked counsellor"** — The margin renders this as "a counsellor of Belial." Belial signifies "worthlessness". It is rendered the "wicked" in V.15. Vine, commenting upon 2 Cor. 6:15, declares that the word signifies extreme wickedness and destruction, the latter indicating the destiny of the former. Belial also personifies impure religion, and it is suggested that originally the word possibly sig-

nified the "Lord of the forest", being identified with the impure rites of paganism. The blasphemous language of Rab-shakeh outside of Jerusalem showed him to be a "counsellor of Belial".

### Comfort For The Oppressed — Vv. 12-15.

*The prophet having pronounced the twofold aspect of Yahweh's character: goodness and severity, now illustrates it by showing that powerful Assyria will be cut down, and downtrodden Judah will flourish.*

### VERSE 12

**"Thus saith Yahweh"** — Such a declaration ensures the authoritative nature of the proclamation, and the assurance that it will accomplish that which it declares. See Isa. 55:11.

**"Though they be quiet"** — The R.V. renders: "in full strength". The Hebrew word is *shalem* and signifies "whole." Though Assyria will be at the peak of power and prosperity, and seemingly impregnable, Yahweh's purpose will be fulfilled against it.

**"Yet thus"** — The R.V. renders: "even so".

**"Cut down"** — the margin gives the Hebrew as "shorn" or "mown". Yahweh, the Divine harvester, will mow them down as useless weeds.

**"When he shall pass through"** — The R.V. renders: "And he shall pass away." The "they" of this verse relates to the soldiers in the Assyrian army; the "he" relates to the power of the Assyrian ruler. In Nahum's prophecy, he is set forth as a type of Gog, so that these expressions apply not only to those times but are prophetic of the destruction that shall be meted out upon the Russian invader of the land when Yahweh will "put in the sickle" as Joel 3:13 predicts.

**"Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more"** —

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These words are spoken to Judah. The oppression the people suffered from Assyria is shown as coming from Yahweh (Isa. 10:5), but now the promise is given that Judah will be completely relieved of the cruel oppression of that brutal power. The fact that the prophet promises Israel that her affliction shall completely cease shows that whatever fulfilment his prophecy had in the past, its complete fulfilment awaits the future. See Jer. 30:8; Ezek. 34:27; 39:28-29; Zech. 14:11.

### VERSE 13

**"For now will I break his yoke from off thee"** — The breaking of the Assyrian yoke in the past was a type of what shall yet be. See Mic. 5:5-6.

### VERSE 14

**"Yahweh hath given a commandment concerning thee"** — Yahweh had spoken concerning the nation, both because it had been then closely connected with His people, and also because Assyria typed Gog of the latter days. In the days of Hezekiah, Sennacherib the king of Assyria was overthrown in a remarkable manner, that foreshadowed the future destruction of Gog in the land. Because of that, greater detail is recorded concerning those events.

**"No more of thy name be sown"** — Nineveh was brought to a complete end; its very memory was destroyed, and that, also, will be the fate of the latter-day manifestation of Assyrian power (cp. Dan. 7:11).

**"Out of the house of thy gods"** — Sennacherib was murdered whilst worshipping in the Temple of Nisroch (Isa. 37:38), which illustrated the inability of his gods to save. What a contrast this was to the earlier boasts of his officer who had lauded their power to the Israelites on the walls of besieged Jerusalem! His boastful impiety was characteristic of the whole nation, as it will be of Gog

at the time of the end (Ezek. 38:11, 12, 16).

**"Will I cut off the graven image"** — A graven image is one carved out of wood or stone; a molten image is one cast in metal. In humiliating the pagan gods of Assyria, Yahweh subjected them to the same treatment that the Assyrians had given to the gods of other nations (2 Kings 19:18).

**"I will make thy grave"** — Yahweh declares that He will dig a grave for both the king and the nation; and so Assyria came to a complete end. Similar words are predicted in regard to Gog and his army, and they will be buried in the land of Israel (see Ezek. 39:11).

### VERSE 15

**"Behold upon the mountains"** — In these words Nahum recorded the great rejoicing that will be witnessed throughout the land of Israel consequent upon the destruction of the Assyrian. The expressions seem borrowed from Isaiah, who used them to describe the coming of Messiah's kingdom (Isa. 52:7; 40:9). They had a special typical significance in the days of Nahum, for following the long, wicked reign of Manasseh, and the brief reign of Amon, Josiah ascended the throne in Jerusalem. He restored the Temple worship, revived the national covenant with Yahweh, destroyed the Baal worship, and saw the destruction of Nineveh, predicted by Nahum. He was a typical king, pointing forward to the Lord Jesus Christ. In him, therefore, there was an incipient fulfilment of this Messianic prophecy, though the complete application of it, awaits the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ will proclaim the Good Tidings to Jerusalem; he will set forth the principles of peace, and he will do this after the latter-day Assyrian has been overthrown.

**"O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts"** — These had been inter-

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rupted whilst the enemy had been triumphant in the land; they were restored by Josiah (2 Chron. 34:31, 35:1). as they will be also by the Lord Jesus Christ (Ezek. 45:20-25). The prophecy shall have its complete fulfilment, therefore, in the future age, when the Temple will be re-established, and Divine worship again conducted in Jerusalem.

**“Perform thy vows”** — Vows are often made in times of trouble when beseeching Yahweh for help. There is a time of trouble coming for Jewry (Jer. 30:5-8), when the latter-day Assyria will overflow the land. This shall cause the people to seek God’s help, and vow vows before Him. The deliverance and salvation that will be brought to them will cause them to “perform their vows.” Elijah will be sent forth to those Jews scattered abroad (Mal. 4:5-6), and the Lord

Jesus will appear to those in the land after the destruction of Gog (Zech. 12:9-14). The result of the revelation and instruction that shall be brought to them at that time, will be a complete change of heart on the part of the people (Jer. 3:17-25; Ezek. 20:37-38; Rom. 11:26).

**“For the wicked”** — Literally, “for the man of Belial.” See margin, and note at v.11. Rotherham renders this as “the wicked one.” It has primary application to the Assyrian king in the past, and to Gog in the future.

**“Shall no more pass through thee”** — The Assyrian was cut off, never again to invade Judah. That also will be the fate of the Russian Gog, the Assyrian of the last days. See Micah 5:5; Zech. 14:21; Joel 3:17. On this note of victory and relief the first section of the prophecy ends.

### GOD GUIDES THE DESTINY OF NATIONS

Not a kingdom has been established, nor a king dethroned, but it has formed a move, which has contributed to the maturity of the present crisis, which will ultimate in the introduction of the Kingdom of God. This truth is beautifully expressed in the words of the prophet, saying, “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are his: and *He changeth the times and the seasons; He removeth kings and setteth up kings . . .*” This is the reason why men and women with so little wisdom, or rather possessed of so much positive folly and imbecility, are able to rule the nations without “setting on fire the course of nature.”

When their wickedness and stupidity become obstacles to His purpose, He removes them out of the way, and introduces other actors upon the stage. In this way, He controls and regulates the world’s affairs; but in every interference He shapes the course of events towards the consummation predetermined from the foundation of the world.

— J. Thomas (*Elpis Israel*).

# CHAPTER 2

## Nineveh's Doom Described

*This chapter presents a graphic word-picture of the sudden attack and destruction of Nineveh. Nahum wrote as an eye-witness, reporting what he actually saw. In vivid detail he described the savage joy of the attackers, and the despondent fear of the besieged. He saw the walls breached and the invading host enter the streets of the city, slaying and destroying as they did so. The streets ran with blood; they echoed with the clash of arms, the shouts of the victors and the despairing cries of the vanquished. Confusion reigned supreme as violence, bloodshed and fear stalked the doomed city. But that did not complete the disaster. The river Tigris rose in flood, and the main defences of the city were swept away. It was now completely open to any enemy who might attack it, and this commenced a period of humiliation and degradation that finally brought Nineveh to utter desolation. It was completely overwhelmed, and the flower of its citizens were taken into captivity. Instead of a wealthy, powerful and populous city, there remained nothing but a desolation, with wild beasts sheltering in what was once the palaces of nobles.*

### CHAPTER 2

1. He that breaketh in pieces hath come up over thy face,  
Keep the keeps,  
Watch the way,  
Brace the loins,  
Make vigour very firm,
2. For Yahweh hath restored the excellency of Jacob, like the excellency of Israel, —  
For the plunderers have plundered them,  
And their vine branches have they marred.
3. The shield of his heroes is made red  
The men of war are clad in crimson,  
On fire are the chariot-steeds, on the day he maketh ready, —  
And the lances are put in motion.
4. In the streets madly go the chariots,  
They rush along in the broad-ways, —  
Their appearance is like torches,  
As lightnings hither and thither do they run.
5. Let him call to mind his nobles,  
They shall stumble as they go —  
Let them hasten to her wall,  
Yet the storming cover is prepared.
6. The gates of the rivers have been opened. —  
And the palace doth quake.
7. And Huzzab hath been taken captive — hath been led up, —  
and her handmaids are making a moan like the sound of doves,
8. as they taber upon their heart.  
Yet as for Nineveh like a reservoir of waters are her waters, —  
But those men are in flight!  
Stand! Stand!  
But no one is turning.
9. Plunder silver, plunder gold, —  
And there is no end to the costly furnishing,  
Rich with every article of delight.
10. Emptiness, yea turned to emptiness, aye deserted (is she!)  
With heart unnerved,  
And a tottering of knees,  
And anguish in all loins,  
And the faces of them all have withdrawn their colour.
11. Where is the lair of the lions?  
Yea the very feeding place of the young lions, —  
Where walked the lion, the lioness, the lion's whelp,  
With none to make them afraid?
12. The lion used to tear in pieces enough for his whelps,  
And to strangle for his lionesses, —  
And then fill with prey his holes,  
And his lairs with what he had torn.
13. Behold me! against thee,  
Declareth Yahweh of hosts,  
Therefore will I burn up in smoke her chariots,  
And thy young lions shall be devoured by the sword, —  
So will I cut off out of the earth, thy prey,  
Nor shall be heard any more the voice of thine envoy.

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### "The City Besieged" — Vv. 1-5.

*According to history, Nineveh was destroyed by the Medes allied to the Babylonians, but in actual fact, it was Yahweh Who overthrew the city. The Medes acted as His army, directed against mighty Nineveh that had dared to challenge Him as an enemy.*

#### VERSE 1

**"He that dasheth in pieces" —** The margin renders this as "The disperser, or, hammer." Rotherham translates as "He that breaketh in pieces." The reference is to the Medes who raced the Babylonians in the attack upon Nineveh. Successfully breaching the city, they completely overwhelmed Assyrian resistance, and so fulfilled Yahweh's Word which is described as a hammer (Jer. 23:29—though this is a different word in the Hebrew). Previously, Yahweh had used Assyria (as He later did Babylon) as His hammer and sickle against the nations (Jer. 50:16,23). It is significant that the symbol of the latter-day Assyrian is the "hammer and sickle"!

**"Before thy face" —** Into your actual presence, attacking the very city.

**"Keep the munition" —** Nahum

very graphically describes the state of panic within the city as the enemy successfully prosecuted his attack. The call is to "keep the munition," or to man the fortresses and towers.

**"Watch the way" —** Set the guards and sentinels in their places.

**"Make thy loins strong" —** Do not give way to fear. The loins were considered by the Hebrews as the seat of strength (2 Chron. 10:10; Job 40:7; Ezek. 29:7; 1 Pet. 1:13). To gird up the loins signified to encourage oneself.

#### VERSE 2

**"For Yahweh hath turned away the excellency of Jacob" —** Instead of "turned away," the R.V. has "bringeth again," and Rotherham has "restored." The word "excellency" (Heb. *gavooth*) signifies "pride" (see margin), or "majesty" (see Strong's Concordance). Nahum therefore predicted the restoration of majesty to Jacob, or Israel after the flesh. Nineveh's fall, in ancient times, led to the elevation of Judah under Josiah, but, of course, the prophet saw beyond those times to the future when the latter-day Assyrian shall be broken, and true and complete majesty shall come to Israel. Meanwhile,

### THE DEFEAT OF ASSYRIA BY THE MEDES

For a considerable period, the Medes were dominated by the Assyrians. The death of Ashurbanipal of Assyria (approx. 626 B.C.) was followed by the sudden and rapid decline of the Empire. Babylon revived under Nabopolassar, Media asserted its independence under Cyaxares, and the two nations entered into a pact or agreement to attack Assyria. For a moment the proposed attack was delayed by the invasion of the brutal and barbarous Scythians who suddenly appeared and indiscriminately attacked nations in their path. This delayed the end of Assyria. In 614 B.C., however, Media and Babylon again entered into alliance and jointly attacked Assyria. Ashur was destroyed by the Medes, for Nabopolassar of Babylon did not arrive in time. However, the two kings: Nabopolassar of Babylon and Cyaxares of Media, met among the ruins of the fallen city, and pledged themselves to friendship and confederacy. In 612 a joint Median-Babylonian attack was made on Nineveh, and the city was overthrown.

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the ascendancy of such a deadly enemy as Nineveh, preaching a blasphemous, anti-semitic philosophy must inevitably be at the expense of Israel and the things that the people of God stand for; but with its decline, Israel shall rise. "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24), and so the "goodness and severity" of God are again contrasted one with the other (Rom. 11:22).

**"As the excellency of Israel" —** Great as the excellency of Jacob was (and as such, the patriarch received the blessing of God, a large family, and much wealth), the "excellency of Israel" is far more honorable. The term recalls the Divine blessing that was bestowed upon Jacob after he had wrestled all night with the angel (Gen. 32:28). He was then told, "He who strives with God and prevails, will certainly prevail with man" (Gen. 32:28-Heb.). Jacob's blessing was incorporated in the name that the angel then gave him, and which proclaimed his changed status before God. Instead of being known as *the supplanter* (Jacob), he was now given the honored name of *a prince with God* (Israel). But, in spite of the blessing, his wrestling with God (the angel) did not leave him unmarked, for, like Jewry which has also striven with God (and during that night of fear, Jacob typed his posterity), he suffered in consequence. The night of wrestling left him lame. He limped upon his thigh. Yet he prevailed, and because of that he should have had no fear of Esau. With the dawning of the new day, when Esau finally came upon Jacob, the latter found that he was Divinely protected, and had really no need to fear his brother. So the remarkable type will be worked out with Israel after the flesh. During the night of Gentile times, the nation has striven with God, and only the unalterable promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:2;

Ezek. 36:22; Rom. 11:28) has preserved it from the utter destruction that it has deserved. In this fact, faith is strengthened by the realisation that God is true to His word (Titus 1:2), and that His mercy is boundless. In due time, He will "save her that halteth" (Zeph. 3:19), an expression that points to the figurative limping of Israel consequent upon the nation's wrestling with God during the centuries of Gentile domination. On the basis of Jacob's experience, Hosea appealed to Israel: "Turn thou to thy God; keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually" (Hos. 12:3-5). The time is coming when the significance of Jacob's changed status will be manifested in the whole nation, for its glory or majesty will be restored, and instead of being viewed as the supplanter, it will be set forth before all mankind as a princely nation: a Prince with God. At that time, the antitypical Nineveh will be completely overthrown (Micah 5:5-6). The fear that Israel after the flesh has experienced towards the Gentiles shall disappear with the dawning of that new day (Mal. 4:1-2).

**"For the emptiers have emptied them out" —** Rotherham renders: "The plunderers have plundered them" — a reference to the treatment that Israel has received from the Gentiles.

**"And marred their vine branches" —** The figure of Israel as a vine, is frequently set forth in Scripture (Ps. 80:8; Isa. 5:7; Jer. 12:10, etc.). The branches of this vine have been ruthlessly broken down by the Gentiles. Their intent has been merely to destroy. That is not so with Yahweh, however, in any disciplinary action He has extended towards the nation. His intent is to "prune" the vine, that it might produce even better fruit (John 15:2); theirs has been merely to mar. They have ruthlessly tried to destroy Israel by their bitter persecution which has brought death to millions. Yahweh is not un-

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moved by such an attitude (see Jer. 51:5), and will repay it by punishing those who so treat His people, even though their violence has stemmed from complete ignorance of His purpose (cp. Jer. 50:7).

### VERSE 3

**"The shield of his mighty men is made red"** — Having indicted Nineveh, and revealed that the punishment about to be meted out to her was just, Nahum proceeded to describe the attack upon the city. He graphically depicted the enemy's approach, and the fear that swept the city as the walls were breached. The "redness" of the shields probably alluded to the highly polished copper with which they were sometimes covered (Jos. Ant. 13, 12, 5), and which is a symbol of the flesh. They were "made red" as the soldiers polished them in preparation for the attack, and as they flashed in the sun. Though recorded from the standpoint of an eye-witness, Nahum's words were prophetic.

**"The valiant men are in scarlet"** — This seems a reference to the military uniforms of the Medes and Babylonians, with whom scarlet seemed to have been a favorite colour (Ezek. 23:14). The Assyrians, on the other hand, seem to have preferred blue (Ezek. 23:6).

**"The chariots shall be with flaming torches"** — The R.V. renders: "The chariots flash with steel." One authority has stated concerning these ancient chariots: "They were conspicuous for shining metal, and were hung around with gleaming weapons and figures of the heavenly bodies. They carried bright-armed warriors which added to their spectacular appearance. The horses were covered with trappings, and were fastened to poles of glittering steel, all of which flashed in the sunshine."

**"The day of his preparation"** — See Isa. 13:4. One can imagine the chariots drawn up in line, and being reviewed by the com-

mander before the attack upon the city.

**"The fir trees shall be terribly shaken"** — The R.V. renders this as "spears;" Rotherham has: "The lances are put in motion."

### VERSE 4

**"The chariots shall rage"** — See Jer. 46:9. They shall dash madly about.

**"The streets"** — According to Dr. Strong, the Hebrew word *chuwts* signifies "outside". It is derived from a root, "to sever" or "separate," as by a wall. Nahum, therefore, describes how that the besieged in the city, would view with fear the approach of the chariot forces of the enemy, as they dash madly about outside the city wall itself. Thus in v.3 there is described the approach of the enemy; in v.4 the attack on the wall; and in v.5 the defence.

**"They shall seem like torches"** — The margin renders: "their show" shall be like torches. With the bright sun gleaming on them, the polished steel and weapons of war shall flash forth like fire.

**"They shall run like the lightnings"** — Referring to their speed.

### VERSE 5

**"He shall recount his worthies"** — Notice the margin. The king of Assyria will organise for the defence of the city, and will call out his captains for that purpose. Cp. Ch. 3:18.

**"They shall stumble in their walk"** — They will stumble through fear or drunkenness (cp. Ch. 1:10), and in either case will reveal their incompetence for the work of defence.

**"They shall haste to the wall thereof"** — To defend it.

**"The defence shall be prepared"** — As the attackers would bring their weapons of offence, such as battering rams, to bear upon the wall, counter measures would be taken by the Assyrians to provide adequate cover against the storm (see Mg.). But it all proved in vain.

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### The City Is Overwhelmed — Vv. 6-10.

*History records that a sudden flooding of the Tigris swept part of the wall of Nineveh away, and through this breach the enemy swarmed in to overwhelm the city.*

#### VERSE 6

**"The gates of the rivers shall be opened"** — The ancient historian, Didorus Siculus declared that "there was an old prophecy, that Nineveh should not be taken, till the river became an enemy to the city: and in the third year to the city: and in the third year of the siege, the river, being swollen with continual rains, overflowed part of the city, and broke down the wall for 20 furlongs; then the king, thinking the oracle was fulfilled, and the river become an enemy to the city, built a large funeral pile in the palace, and collecting together all his wealth, and his concubines, and eunuchs, burnt himself and his palace with them all; and the enemy entered at the breach that the waters had made, and took the city."

There is archaeological evidence of this destruction. Professor Rawlinson, in *Ancient Monarchies*, vol. ii, p. 397, records: "At the northwest angle of the city, there was a sluice or flood-gate, intended mainly to keep the water of the Khorsu, which ordinarily filled the city moat, from flowing off too rapidly into the Tigris, when that stream rose above its common level. A sudden and great rise in the Tigris would necessarily endanger this gate, and if it gave way beneath the pressure, a vast torrent of water would rush up the moat along and against the northern wall, which may have been undermined by its force, and have fallen in."

**"And the palace shall be dissolved"** — The margin renders this as "molten." Rotherham has "doth quake." The sudden, unexpected successful attack of the

enemy would cause the royal power to melt in fear. According to the historian, the king committed suicide when he heard that the city walls had been breached.

#### VERSE 7

**"And Huzzab shall be led away captive"** — The margin gives the meaning of Huzzab as "That which was established." The word signifies "firm" or "bold" and is used as an appellative for Nineveh whose power was so mighty, as to suggest that the city was established upon such a firm foundation as never to be overthrown. Similar appellatives are used for the other nations. Thus Egypt is called Rahab (or the arrogant) — see Ps. 89:10; the king of Assyria is called Jareb (or the contentious — see Hos. 5:13); Jerusalem is called Ariel (or El's lion — Isa. 29:1). There is a play upon words in Nahum's statement, as he proclaims that that which was established "shall be led away captive." The margin renders this as "discovered", and the R.V. has "uncovered," or laid bare, a term that speaks of Nineveh's nakedness (cp. Rev. 16:15).

**"She shall be brought up"** — The R.V. has "carried away."

**"Her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves"** — Instead of "lead her" the R.V. has "mourn." The voice of doves is likened elsewhere to the voice of mourning (Isa. 38:14).

**"Tabering upon their breasts"** — This was the normal custom in times of mourning. See Luke 18:13; 23:48.

#### VERSE 8

**"But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water"** — The margin renders "of old," as "from the days that she hath been," so that at this point Nahum begins to review the past, and consider the ancient glory of the doomed city. Rotherham renders: "As for Nineveh, like a reservoir of waters are



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her waters." Her wealth and power has been like a reservoir replenished from tributaries. These tributaries are the nations whose wealth was poured into the mighty and brutal city, constantly replenishing her wealth. See Rev. 17:15.

**"Yet they shall flee away"** — The reference is to the army, the symbol of Assyrian power. Though it once dominated these nations, it shall ignominiously flee before the enemy.

**"Stand, Stand, shall they cry"** — The prophet graphically described how the fear-stricken army would flee. The officers would order the soldiers to stand and resist the enemy, but in vain.

**"None shall look back"** — Note the marginal rendition: "None shall cause them to turn." They shall flee in panic-stricken terror.

### VERSE 9

**"Take ye the spoil of silver, of gold"** — The city shall be laid open to rapine and spoilation.

**"There is none end of the store and glory"** — The wealth of the world was poured into ancient Nineveh, only to become the spoil of its enemies when it fell before their attack. Concerning the wealth of Nineveh, Bonomi, in *"Nineveh and its Discoveries"* wrote: "The riches of Nineveh are inexhaustible, her vases and precious furniture are infinite, copper constantly occurs in their weapons, and it is most probable a mixture of it that was used in the materials of their tools. They had acquired the art of making glass . . . The well known cylinders are a sufficient proof of their skill in engraving gems. Many beautiful specimens of carving in ivory were also discovered . . . The condition of the ruins is highly corroborative of the sudden destruction that came on Nineveh by fire and sword . . . It is evident from the ruins that both Khorsabad and Nimroud were sacked and then set on fire. Neither Botta nor Layard found any of that store of silver and

gold and 'pleasant furniture' which the palaces contained; scarcely anything, even of bronze, escaped the spoiler."

Thus the archaeologist confirms Scripture.

### VERSE 10

**"She is empty, and void, and waste"** — So completely was Nineveh overthrown, that by the second century A.D., the very site of the city was in doubt.

**"The heart melteth," etc.** — This is indicative of the fear that should so dominate the Assyrian soldiers as to make them useless for battle.

**"Much pain in all loins"** — Like the pangs of labor. See Isa. 13:8.

**"Faces gather blackness"** — The R.V. renders: "Are waxed pale."

### The City Is Made Desolate — Vv. 11-13.

*The city was so completely overwhelmed that the site reverted back to its original desolate condition, so that where once were found busy concourses of people, there now assembled the wild beasts of the wilderness. This is a token of the end of Gentile power.*

### VERSE 11

**"Where is the dwelling of the lions"** — The lion is used in Scripture as a symbol of Assyria and Babylon (Jer. 2:15; 4:7; 50:17; Dan. 7:4). The dwelling place of the Assyrian lion was Nineveh; but prophetically Nahum saw it deserted and desolate. The lion was an appropriate symbol for Assyria, because it was used by them as a national emblem. Nergal, the war god of Assyria, was a winged lion with a man's face.

**"The feeding place of the young lions"** — In accordance with the symbol, the feeding place of such would be the subject countries.

**"The lion, even the old lion"** — The R.V. renders with Rotherham: "And the lioness." The pic-

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ture drawn is that of the lion family as a whole, representative of the Assyrian empire.

### VERSE 12

**"The lion did tear in pieces"** — This is a reference to the ruthless, brutal cruelty of the Assyrians. The pages of history are nowhere more bloody than in the records of the wars of the Assyrians. It is said that they contributed nothing to the progress of humanity, and left only a heritage of extreme brutality.

**"Ravin"** — The word signifies something torn, i.e. the prey.

### VERSE 13

**"I am against thee, saith Yahweh of hosts"** — Yahweh of hosts is the militant title of Deity, indicative of that heavenly Elohist army, the captain of which appeared to Joshua just before the attack on Jericho (Josh. 5:14). This heavenly army was sent to protect Elisha (2 Kings 6:17). It fought for Judah against Israel (2 Chron. 13:11-16), so that the king could say: "Behold, God Himself is with us for our captain." Hezekiah relied upon this army when he was threatened by the Assyrian king, and he strengthened the people by exhorting them: "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there be more with us than with him; with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is Yahweh our God to help us, and to fight our battles" (2 Chron. 32:7-8). Christ, likewise, made reference to this heavenly army (Matt. 26:53).

"Yahweh of hosts," however, is a prophetic title. "Yahweh," the

Divine name signifies "He will be" from the root *Ehyeh*, to be, or become. Yahweh of hosts, or armies, therefore, proclaims what He will yet become in the earth, for He will yet manifest Himself in an army that will destroy the latter-day Assyrian. Christ is the Commander in chief of that army (Isa. 55:4), and his followers have been recruited as soldiers in training for the spiritual warfare he has set for them (2 Tim. 2:3), and which is preparatory to them playing their part in overthrowing the powers that be, in order that God's kingdom may be established on earth (Psalm 149:5-9; Dan. 2:44). The future warfare of Yahweh of Armies is described in Revelation 19:11-21.

Yahweh of hosts waged war with the Assyrian in the past, and will do so with its modern counterpart in the future (Isa. 9:7; Mic. 5:6).

**"I will burn her chariots in the smoke"** — Nahum predicted the destruction of Assyrian military power. This was the work of Yahweh, and the Medes were but His agents to accomplish His work. See also Ezekiel 39:9.

**"The sword shall devour thy young lions"** — The princes and officials of the Assyrian empire would be put to the sword.

**"I will cut off Thy prey from the earth"** — The Assyrian will no longer have the power to ravage other countries, and spoil them of prey.

**"The voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard"** — The godless boasts of Assyrian emissaries, such as Rab-shakeh (Isa. 36:12-20) shall cease for ever.

### THE ARMY OF YAHWEH

"Let the saints be joyful in glory . . . Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand . . . To execute vengeance . . . and punishments . . . to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all the saints" (Psa. 148).

## CHAPTER 3

### *Nineveh's Doom Deserved*

*History testifies that of all the oppressors of Israel, Assyria was the most brutal. Wherever its armies penetrated, they left a trail of pillage, bloodshed and ruin. From the first, the Assyrians were hunters and warriors, and when they turned to war, their persistent efforts at conquest gradually hardened the nation into a very efficient fighting machine. The Assyrians were essentially a military people, strongly differentiated in this respect from the commercially inclined Babylonians.*

*One of their kings, Ashur-nasir-pal, has left a detailed account of his conquests, and they form a catalogue of pitiless torture and destruction: "I took the city, their fighting men I put to the sword, and I cut off their heads. Many I captured alive and the rest I burned with fire. Heaps of corpses and of heads I piled up over against their city gate, and seven hundred men I impaled on stakes around the city. Their young men and maidens I burned in the fire, and I laid waste their city and turned it into heaps of ruins."*

*The general policy of Assyria was the complete annihilation of the enemy, and this objective was pursued with ruthless brutality. Cities were destroyed, captives were treated with the most barbarous brutality, nations were taken into captivity and scattered into foreign lands, torture was common.*

*Nahum described this in his third chapter. He records that so violent and bloodthirsty were the Assyrians, that the whole world rejoiced at their downfall; they had not a friend to lament their plight. Moreover, so complete was the destruction of Nineveh, as predicted by Nahum, that it undermined the strength of the whole nation which soon disappeared as completely as the city. One historian has written: "The fall of the Assyrian kingdom was followed by the almost complete disappearance of the Assyrian people themselves, which is a phenomenon without parallel in the annals of ancient history. Nor is it possible to discover any lasting Assyrian influence on the history of later ages, unless it be in the political organisation . . . of subsequent oriental monarchies conforming to the same type of polity" (The Assyrians — C. Winckworth).*

*The chapter before us can be conveniently divided into three sections: 1. — the cause of the overthrow (vv. 1-4); 2. — The lesson of the overthrow (vv. 6-13); 3. — The certainty of the overthrow (vv. 14-19). As with the rest of the prophecy, though this chapter primarily related to Assyria in the past, it also has an application to the Assyria of the latter days.*

## PROPHECY OF NAHUM

### CHAPTER 3

1. Alas for the city of bloodshed!  
All of it deceit,  
of violence full,  
none releaseth prey!
2. The sound of the whip,  
And the sound of the rushing  
wheel, —  
And horse galloping,  
And dancing chariot rattling along.
3. Horsemen uplifting both the  
flashing sword, and the lightning  
spear,  
Aye, a mass of slain, and  
A weight of dead bodies, — and  
No end of corpses,  
So that they stumble upon their  
corpses.
4. Because of the multitude of the  
unchaste doings of the unchaste  
one,  
Fair in grace, mistress of secret  
arts, —  
Who hath been selling  
Nations by her unchaste doings,  
Families by her secret arts.
5. Behold me! against thee,  
Declareth Yahweh of hosts,  
Therefore will I remove thy skirts  
over thy face, —  
And let nations see thy naked-  
ness, and kingdoms thy shame.
6. And I will  
cast upon thee abominable filth,  
and  
treat thee as foolish, — and  
set thee as a gazing-stock.
7. And it shall come to pass that  
all who see thee shall flee from  
thee,  
And shall say,  
Destroyed is Nineveh!  
Who will bemoan her?  
Whence shall I seek any to  
comfort thee?
8. Art thou better than No-amon,  
Who sat among the Nile-streams,  
Waters round about her, —  
Whose fortress was the sea,  
From the sea her wall.
9. Ethiopia was her strength, and  
Egypt —  
Yea without end, —  
Put and Lubim were among thy  
helpers.
10. Yet she was given up to exile,  
She went into captivity,  
Even her babes were dashed to  
the ground at the head of all the  
streets —  
And for her honourable men cast  
they lots,  
And all her great men were  
bound together in chains.
11. Thou too shalt be drunken,  
Thou shalt hide thyself, —  
Thou too shalt seek shelter from  
the foe:
12. All thy fortresses shall be fig-  
trees with first-ripe figs:  
If they be shaken then shall the  
fruit fall on the mouth of the  
eater.
13. Lo! thy people are women in thy  
midst,  
To thy foes have been set wide  
open the gates of thy land, —  
A fire hath devoured thy bars.

### The Cause Of The Overthrow — Vv. 1-5.

*Nahum showed that the cause of Nineveh's overthrow was her gross cruelty and idolatry.*

### VERSE 1

“Woe to the bloody city” — The margin transfers this to the “city of bloods,” or of violence. Nineveh's gross cruelty is well known to historians and is attested by monuments on which are described or portrayed prisoners impaled alive, flayed, beheaded, dragged to death with ropes passed through rings in their lips, blinded by the king's own hand, hung up by hands or feet to die in slow torture (See *Nineveh and Its Discoveries*, Bonomi). Others are shown having their brains beaten out, their tongues torn out by the

roots, or with the bleeding heads of the slain tied around the necks of the living who are reserved for further torture (See *Nineveh and Babylon*, Layard). Assyria contributed nothing to civilisation in the furtherance of culture or knowledge, and is only noted for its brutality.

“Full of lies and robbery” — Rotherham renders: “robbery” as “violence.” Assyria was noted for treachery (lies) and violence.

“The prey departeth not” — The rapacity of Assyrians is never satisfied. They hoard up the prey, and in their greed demand more.

### VERSE 2

“The noise of a whip” — In vivid language the prophet described the approach of the

## PROPHECY OF NAHUM

enemy. He evidently saw this in vision, and recorded what he saw. Prophets were called "seers" for that reason (1 Sam. 9:9; 1 Chron. 9:22; 26:28; 29:29). Isaiah recorded the "vision" which "he saw" (Isa. 1:1; 2:1). Nahum heard the sound of the whip, the noise of the wheels, the hoof-beats of the galloping horses, and the creak of the lurching chariots.

### VERSE 3

**"The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear"** — The margin gives the Hebrew: "The flames of the sword, and the lightning of the spear." Nahum saw and described the flash of the sun as it was reflected on the steel weapons of the invaders. He saw the sword and spear held triumphantly aloft.

**"They stumble upon their corpses"** — These words describe the terrible carnage of war. Nahum saw the city breached, the inhabitants paralysed with fear, the invaders driving their chariots through the streets with sword and spear uplifted to strike, and leaving a trail of devastation and death behind them. So terrible was the slaughter, that the vehicles were impeded by the heaps of the slain.

### VERSE 4

**"Because of the multitude of the whoredoms"** — Because of Assyria's idolatry with which was associated gross immorality.

**"The well favoured harlot"** — This is a reference to the lavish display of the Temples and Cities of Assyria; but though so dazzling without, it was filled with rottenness within.

**"The mistress of witchcrafts"** — Heb. *kesheph*, "to enchant or practice magic," i.e. to weave a spell. This relates to Assyria's skill in seducing nations (cp. Isa. 36:16-17). In Galatians 5:20, "witchcraft" is used to describe the stupefying effects of false doctrine.

The Greek word is *pharmakia*, and it signifies the removing of an evil, or the infliction of one, by means of a drug. In the case of religion the drug comprises false doctrine. For example, the theory of an immortal soul has acted as a mental drug. This is witchcraft, and should be destroyed. Assyria and Babylon were both mistresses of such witchcrafts.

**"That selleth nations"** — Entire nations were deprived of freedom, and taken into captivity, by Assyria.

### VERSE 5

**"Behold I am against thee, saith Yahweh of hosts"** — See Ch. 2:13. Yahweh of hosts is the militant title of Deity, and the statement of this verse constitutes His declaration of war against brutal, vicious, evil Assyria.

**"I will discover thy skirts upon thy face"** — Rotherham renders: "Therefore will I remove thy skirts over thy face." Yahweh will treat Assyria as the harlot that she is, and will reveal her shame for all mankind to see. See Isa. 3:17; Jer. 13:26; Lam. 1:8.

**"I will shew the nations thy nakedness"** — They shall see her for what she is: an adulteress; her sin shall be made manifest to the nations (Cp. Rev. 16:15).

### The Lesson Of The Overthrow — Vv. 6-13

*The sudden and complete destruction of such a mighty and powerful city revealed that flesh is helpless against Yahweh's mighty power. In this section of his prophecy, Nahum showed that power built upon such principles as those upon which Nineveh's was built, cannot hope to succeed. The righteousness of Yahweh demands that He move against such.*

### VERSE 6

**"I will cast abominable filth upon thee"** — The metaphor is that of

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a vile woman caught in her iniquity, and exposed to the insults and ill treatment of the rabble.

**"Will set thee as a gazingstock"** — The destruction of Nineveh would become an object-lesson to all nations, that all might see and take warning from her fate.

### VERSE 7

**"All shall flee from thee"** — God knew that the nations had no love for Nineveh, and in the time of her need would flee from her in case they were involved in the same calamity. This came to pass in the day of her destruction; all rejoiced at her fall.

### VERSE 8

**"Art thou better than populous No"** — According to the margin, "populous No" should be rendered "No Amon". This is a reference to the city of No-Thebes of the god Amon (signifying "populous"). Thebes was considered the most splendid city of Egypt. Diodorus visited it in 57 B.C. and found it largely in ruins. However the evidence of its past greatness revealed a most magnificent and luxurious city, so that he claimed that it was, in the day of its glory, the most beautiful and most stately city, not only of Egypt, but of all the world. It was adorned with elegant public buildings, magnificent temples, and rich memorials, while some of its private houses were four or five storeys high. It contained the Temple of Karnach which was, and even in its ruinous state still is, a marvel. Thebes was called by the Egyptians, "The House of Amon," "The Mysterious City," "The City of the Hidden Name," "The City of the Lord of Eternity," "The Mistress of Might," and so on. It was splendidly situated, in a most fertile and attractive part of the land, on both sides of the Nile, and through its gates the wealth of Egypt passed to make this glorious city even more resplendent. But Thebes was taken and sacked by the Assyrian Assur-

panipal about B.C. 665, and was greatly reduced in splendour and power to gradually fall into ruin. Nahum used the lesson of the fall of this, the world's wonder city of antiquity, to point out to Nineveh that she could not claim any greater fame or beauty than Thebes which came to an end, and that her predicted demise would also take place. Populous No, or No Amon signifies "The House of Amon," and Amon was the solar god of Egypt. It suffered an eclipse at the hands of the Assyrians; and the latter was about to experience the same fate at the hands of Yahweh. This reference to Thebes assists in dating the period of Nahum, which must have been after B.C.665, but before the destruction of Nineveh.

**"Whose bulwark was the sea"** — Thebes was situated on both sides of the Nile, not on the Mediterranean Sea. However, large rivers are sometimes referred to as seas in Scripture (see Isa. 19:5; 27:1; Jer. 51:36), and this explains Nahum's use of the term.

**"Her wall was from the sea"** — Thebes was surrounded by a powerful wall which is reputed to have had at least one hundred gates. In addition to this, the river Nile and associated canals formed additional defence, so that Nahum was able to describe her wall as being from the sea. Altogether, Thebes was a very powerful city; yet it fell, forshadowing the fate of Nineveh! And the fate of Nineveh foreshadows the fate of the present-day mighty cities of the Gentiles.

**"Ethiopia was her strength"** — The 25th dynasty of Egypt was Ethiopian in character, moreover Ethiopian soldiers were reckoned among the best of Egypt's forces (2 Chron. 12:3), illustrating Nahum's comment.

**"Egypt was her strength"** — Despite the fact that Thebes was supported by the cream of Egyptian forces (the Ethiopians), and that she commanded the wealth

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and resources of Egypt itself, it was brought to an ignominious end. This should have been a warning to Nineveh, but it was not. Thebes was once the residence of the Pharaohs, and the splendour of its ruins, even today, indicates the magnificence of the city in its heyday.

**"It was infinite"** — Rotherham renders "infinite" as "without end." 2 Chron. 12:3 states that her soldiers were "without number."

**"Put"** — This is identified with Punt, or modern Somaliland, and thus provides an indication of her widespread influence.

**"Lubim"** — The Libyans. Libya is towards the west of Egypt, indicating that the latter nation had extended its power and influence far to the east and west, and yet it was destroyed.

### VERSE 10

**"Yet was she carried away"** — The defeat of Thebes is recorded in Assyrian annals, and was referred to by the prophet to show Nineveh that her wealth, power and glory would not save her.

**"Young children dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets"** — This brutal treatment of children was done in the most public places, and was the normal treatment carried out by the Assyrians against their enemies. This savagery was practised as a warning to the defeated as to how ruthlessly they would be punished if they dared to resist.

**"Her great men were bound in chains"** — The most honorable men of defeated nations were usually cruelly dragged along into captivity bound by a rope fastened to a ring in the lip. Figuratively, the Assyrian was repaid in similar fashion (2 Kings 19:28), a treatment reserved of Yahweh for the latter-day Assyrian, when He will "put hooks in his jaws" and lead him forth (Ezek. 38:4).

### VERSE 11

**"Thou also shalt be drunken"** — Nineveh was warned that it would likewise be made to drink the cup of affliction, like Thebes (Jer. 25:15, 17, 27).

**"Thou shalt be hid"** — Rotherham renders this: "Hide thyself." The prophet ironically bids them to hide from the impending trouble in recognition of their helplessness, but knowing it would be in vain.

**"Thou shalt seek strength because of the enemy"** — Nineveh, in desperation, would look for allies to help, but as with Thebes before her, it would be in vain. There is only One reliable Source of strength in time of need, but Assyria had no claim to it (Ps. 37:37-40).

### VERSE 12

**"All thy strongholds shall be like fig trees with the firstripe figs"** — This is a very descriptive figure of speech, for firstripe figs fall at the least shake of the tree by those seeking them (Isa. 28:4). The analogy indicates the ease with which the strongholds would fall to the enemy.

### VERSE 13

**"Thy people are women"** — The Assyrian men would become as women, in the sense that they would be fearful and terrified at the fierce attack of the enemy, and so would be unable to fight effectively. A similar expression is used in regard to Egypt (Isa. 19:16), Babylon (Jer. 51:30) and Israel (Isa. 3:12) under similar circumstances.

**"The gates of thy land shall be set wide open"** — The gates of the land refer to the approaches and passes leading into Assyria which would be easily taken by the enemy, leaving the city itself open to attack. (See Jer. 15:7; Mic. 5:6). The "gates of the land" are in contrast to the "gates of the rivers" referred to in Ch. 2:6:

**"Fire shall devour thy bars"** —

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The bars refer to the gates that barred access to the city itself. Excavations reveal that Nineveh was partly destroyed by fire.

### The Certainty Of The Overthrow — Vv. 14-19.

*It must have appeared incredible to the contemporaries of Nahum that so mighty and ancient a city as Nineveh should be so completely, suddenly and quickly overthrown, and yet God's word was completely fulfilled. Today, the ruins of the ancient city testify to the truth of Bible prophecy. And now we live at the threshold of the destruction of Assyria's modern antitype! The nations are building up their power; the word of God is ridiculed on all sides; the flesh is everywhere in the ascendancy, and seems so strong and permanent. But the fate of ancient Nineveh is a graphic reminder that it is Yahweh's power that shall finally prevail, and modern civilisation shall be overthrown just as completely as was ancient Nineveh.*

### VERSE 14

**"Draw thee waters for the siege"** — The prophet ironically bids the Ninevites to prepare for a long siege, for in spite of all their efforts they would be overthrown. See also the ironical invitation of Ezekiel to Gog, the latter-day Assyrian (Ezek. 38:7).

**"Go into clay, and tread the mortar"** — The soil adjacent to ancient Nineveh is of such a tenacious quality that when mixed with water, and kneaded, it easily can be formed into bricks, whether sun-dried or kiln-baked. Both kinds were used, and the clay was usually mixed with chopped straw. The prophet mocked the Ninevites by inviting them to make the greatest preparation for the defence and strengthening of their city if they would, but their efforts would all be in vain.

**"Make strong the brickkiln"** — The R.V. margin renders this:

"Lay hold of the brick mould" i.e. get busy making bricks to build up your walls — for you will need them!

### VERSE 15

**"There shall the fire devour thee"** — The word of Yahweh is so sure that in the very places where the Ninevites would make their greatest preparations they would experience their greatest defeats. Not only would the waters of the river rise up against the brutal and wicked city (Ch. 2:6), but fire also would devour the walls, whilst the sword would consume the people.

**"It shall eat thee up like the cankerworm"** — The Hebrew word *yeleq* signifies "devourer," and occurs in Joel 1:4. The enemy would attack Nineveh as suddenly and destructively as would a swarm of devouring locusts, suddenly alighting upon a field and quickly consuming existing vegetation.

**"Make thyself many as the cankerworm"** — The prophet invited the Assyrians to assemble all its forces, and multiply them as she will, but she would not prevail. See the similar ironical invitation in Ezekiel 38:7; Joel 3:11.

**"Make thyself many as the locusts"** — The Hebrew word is *harbeh*, and signifies "increaser" from the way in which locusts rapidly increase. But, warned the prophet, no matter how Assyria might imitate the locusts in that regard, and rapidly increase its forces, it would still be overthrown.

### VERSE 16

**"Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven"** — The military power of Assyria was rivalled by its commercial strength. This provided the nation with the resources to continue its campaigns of conquest, and added to the seeming prosperity and permanence of Nineveh.

**"The cankerworm spoileth and fleeth away"** — The cankerworm



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appears, strips a field bare of its verdure, and then moves on. The invader would treat Nineveh in similar fashion. It would be destroyed, and the conquerors would then move on to further conquests.

### VERSE 17

**"Thy crowned are as the locusts"** — Rotherham, following the *LXX*, renders: "Thy mercenary crowds are like the swarming locust." This rendition implies the ever increasing commercial population of Nineveh; if the A.V. is followed, however, it suggests the great increase of those in authority.

**"Thy captains"** — The Hebrew word is *Taphsar*, and it appears to have been an Assyrian title. The only other place where it is used is in Jer. 51:27. It suggests those who have been elevated into commanding positions of authority.

**"As the great grasshoppers"** — Rotherham renders this as, "Swarms of locusts." The Hebrew word, *gowb*, signifies "to grub." The reference here, however, is not so much to the grasshopper as such, as to its habit, as Nahum's subsequent comments suggest.

**"Which camp in the hedges in the cold day"** — These grasshoppers become torpid in cold weather, and cease their activities. Nahum likened the captains of Nineveh to them, predicting that they would become inefficient and torpid in the day of calamity.

**"Their place is not known where they are"** — Grasshoppers disappear as suddenly and as unexpectedly as they appear, and Nahum likened the Assyrian captains to them. Adversity would find them gone!

In view of Nahum's use of the locust as a symbol, both of the enemies of the Assyrians, as well as its own people and rulers, the following account of the habits of these creatures is interesting and helpful: "Vast bodies of migrating locusts, called by the orientals the armies of God, lay waste the country. They observe a regular

order, when they march, as an army. At evening they descend from their flight, and form, as it were, their camps. In the morning, when the sun has risen considerably, they ascend again, if they do not find food, and fly in the direction of the wind (Prov. 30:27; Nah. 3:16,17). They go in immense numbers (Jer. 46:23), and occupy a space of ten or twelve miles in length, and four or five in breadth, and so deep that the sun cannot penetrate through them; so that they convert the day into night, and bring a temporary darkness on the land (Joel 2:2, 10; Exod. 10:15). The sound of their wings is terrible (Joel 2:2). When they descend upon the earth, they cover a vast track a foot and a half high; if the air is cold and moist, or if they be wet with the dew they remain . . . till they are dried and warmed by the sun (Nah. 3:17). Nothing stops them. They fill the ditches which are dug to stop them with their bodies, and extinguish by their numbers the fires which are kindled. They pass over the walls and enter the doors and windows of houses (Joel 2:7-9). They devour everything which is green, strip off the bark of trees, and even break them to pieces by their weight (Exod. 10:12-19; Joel 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 16, 18, 20; 2:3)."

A locust attack is therefore a terrifying experience, and by use of the symbol the Ninevites knew what to expect.

### VERSE 18

**"Thy shepherds slumber"** — The nation's guides and counsellors would sleep as in death (Ps. 76:5-6). They would not manifest the vigilance necessary under such conditions.

**"Thy nobles shall dwell in the dust"** — The margin renders "nobles" as "valiant ones" or warriors. Assyrian warriors would be slain; the people would be scattered; none would be able to re-gather them, or restore the power of Nineveh.

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### VERSE 19

**"There is no healing of thy bruise"** — The R.V. renders "bruise" as "hurt." The word in the Hebrew signifies a "fracture," such as the seed of the woman is to administer the "seed of the serpent" (Gen. 3:15). The latter-day Assyrian will represent the Seed of the Serpent in political manifestation, to be fractured on the head, by the stone power of Daniel 2:44. There will be no healing of that bruise, or hurt!

**"Thy wound is grievous"** — The literal word signifies "a blow." It is the same word as is rendered "plagues" in Lev. 26:21; Deut. 28:59, etc., and signified the punishment that Yahweh would administer to this evil people.

**"All that hear the bruit of thee"** — All that hear the report of thee, shall rejoice. There will be no sympathy for brutal Assyria nor Nineveh.

**"For upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually"** — All suffered from Assyrian cruelty and aggression, and all would rejoice in its overthrow. The whole world lay at its feet at one time, and the whole world was relieved at its downfall. As the nations rejoiced over the destruction of Nineveh in the past, so they will rejoice when, at last, the latter-day Assyrian, Russian Gog will be finally overthrown, (Mic. 5:6-7; 4:3) and the Kingdom of God will replace Gentile might (Isa. 2:2-4). "Even so come, Lord Jesus!"

## *The Dramatic Sequel: A Rejoicing World*

Vividly, dramatically, Nahum spoke his message to the people. He took them, as it were, outside the walls of mighty Nineveh as the enemy prepared to attack it; and then he led them within, that they might see the fear and consternation that would sweep the brutal city as it awaited its moment of doom. He graphically portrayed the chariots massed against the city, the sun gleaming on the lances, swords and other weapons of war, the horses straining to be off, the soldiers ready for the attack; and then he revealed the defenders either paralysed with fear, or carousing in drunken pleasure whilst awaiting the outcome. It is a picture, not only of those times, but also of the future.

The downfall of the brutal power of the north would be celebrated by the proclamation of the Gospel message proclaiming peace and goodwill to the people of God, causing happiness to hearts previously heavy with dread.

Nahum's prophecy concludes on a note that illustrates the meaning of his name as the Comforter, for it states that the destruction of Nineveh would be applauded by the rejoicing of all people as they felt the shackles of oppression removed from them. There would be general acclamation at the report of the calamity that would overwhelm Nineveh! The news would be received with joy, and a period of world-wide rejoicing would result.

How true this is of the future, when the antitype of ancient Assyria and Nineveh will meet its doom at the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ (Micah 5:5-6). The world will at first stand in awe at the terrible and decisive overthrow, but then, as it comes to recognise the significance of it, and experiences the results of it, it will spontaneously burst into acclamation that the flesh in political manifestation has been overthrown, and men are freed to worship Yahweh in the beauty of holiness.

The world is approaching the time when the latter-day Assyrian will be revealed. Already, preparations to defend that which he claims as his own are well in hand. Soon the world will be plunged into Armageddon, and the prophetic pictures of the Word will become a reality in the earth. The Stone power will destroy the Image to the ultimate joy of all mankind. All will applaud the overthrow of Gog, and the consequent proclamation of peace to all mankind conditional upon their acceptance of the righteous rule of Messiah. For the true comforter of Zion will be here to "build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; to build again the ruins thereof and set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom My name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" (Acts 15:16-17).

May we rejoice with all mankind in that day, not merely in the fact that the latter-day Assyrian has been overwhelmed, but that we have gained the victory over the world through our faith, and have been granted the grand gift of heavenly health, even life eternal.

#### **THE PROPER USE OF THE PROPHETIC WORD**

In ages past, God has had among the nations a people of His own. These are wise in the wisdom of God, and venerate His word above all things. Though not His counsellors, He has graciously condescended to inform them what He intends to do before it comes to pass. Hence, it is testified by the prophet that "the Lord God will surely do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets". This revelation is made that His people's faith may be confirmed and enlarged, and that in every generation they may know the times and seasons to which they stand related. Knowing the signs, they are enabled to discern the times; and while consternation and dismay cause men's hearts to fail they are courageous, and rejoice in perceiving the approach of the Kingdom of God.

This is the proper use of the prophetic word.

— J. Thomas, *Elpis Israel*.

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