

Nahum 1:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

Analysis

But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof (uveshetef over kalah ya'aseh meqomah, עֲבֹר שֵׁתֶף כָּלָה יָאֵשׁ מֶקוּמָה). The shetef (שֵׁתֶף, "flood") imagery likely refers both to literal flooding and metaphorical overwhelming judgment. Historical accounts suggest the Tigris River flooded during Nineveh's siege (612 BC), weakening walls and enabling conquest—a literal fulfillment. Kalah (כָּלָה, "complete end/destruction") emphasizes totality—not partial defeat but utter annihilation. "The place thereof" (meqomah) indicates Nineveh's physical location will be obliterated.

And darkness shall pursue his enemies (vechoshekh yerodef oyevav, וְחֹשֶׁךְ יְרוֹדֵף אוֹיְבָיו). Choshek (חֹשֶׁךְ, "darkness") represents calamity, judgment, and death—the opposite of God's light and blessing. Radaph (רָדָף, "pursue") depicts relentless hunting—enemies cannot escape. God's judgment isn't passive but active pursuit. This combines natural disaster (flood) with supernatural intervention (darkness pursuing) to demonstrate God's comprehensive sovereignty over both nature and history.

The prophecy was precisely fulfilled. Nineveh was destroyed so completely in 612 BC that its location was lost for over 2,000 years until archaeological rediscovery in the 1840s. Ancient historians (Diodorus Siculus, Xenophon) describe how the Tigris flooded, breaching walls and enabling the Babylonian-Median coalition to conquer the supposedly impregnable city. God used natural means (flood) to accomplish supernatural purposes (judgment on wickedness).

Historical Context

Nineveh was built on the Tigris River, using its waters for moats, irrigation, and defense. Yet the river that provided security became the instrument of destruction. The Babylonian Chronicle and classical historians describe how exceptionally heavy rains caused the river to flood, undermining the city walls and creating breaches through which attackers poured. This fulfilled Nahum's prophecy with remarkable precision. The city's destruction was so thorough that by the time of Greek historian Xenophon (401 BC), he passed by the ruins without recognizing them. Nineveh remained lost until Austen Henry Layard's excavations (1845-1851) rediscovered it, confirming biblical and Assyrian records.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's use of natural forces (flood, darkness) to accomplish His purposes demonstrate His comprehensive sovereignty?
2. What does Nineveh's complete obliteration teach about the permanence and thoroughness of divine judgment against persistent wickedness?
3. How should the historical fulfillment of Nahum's detailed prophecies strengthen our confidence in biblical prophecy's reliability?

Interlinear Text

וּבָשָׂר

flood

H7858

עַבְרָה

But with an overrunning

H5674

כָּל הַ

an utter end

H3617

יַעֲשֶׂה

he will make

H6213

מִקְרָמַת הַ

of the place

H4725

וְאִיבָּרִים

his enemies

H341

יְכַדְּךָ

shall pursue

H7291

חֹשֶׁךְ:

thereof and darkness

H2822

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 28:17 (Parallel theme): Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

Isaiah 8:22 (Darkness): And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.

Ezekiel 13:13 (Parallel theme): Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it.

Amos 8:8 (Parallel theme): Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

Zephaniah 2:13 (Parallel theme): And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness.

Job 30:15 (Parallel theme): Terrors are turned upon me: they pursue my soul as the wind: and my welfare passeth away as a cloud.

Proverbs 4:19 (Darkness): The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

Jeremiah 13:16 (Darkness): Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.

Matthew 8:12 (Darkness): But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 7:27 (Parallel theme): And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.