

Nahum 1:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.

Analysis

Nahum challenges Nineveh directly: "What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time." The Hebrew *mah-techashevun el-YHWH kalah hu oseh lo-taqum pa'amayim tzarah* (מַה־תַּחֲשֹׁבִין אֶל־יְהוָה כָּלָה הוּא עֹשֶׂה לֹא־תִקּוּם פַּעַמַּיִם צָרָה) is both taunt and warning.

"What do ye imagine against the LORD?" (*mah-techashevun el-YHWH*) uses *chashav* (חָשַׁב), meaning to think, plan, or devise. Nahum asks rhetorically: what are you plotting? Do you think you can resist or escape God's judgment? The question expects the answer: nothing you devise will work. This echoes Psalm 2:1-4: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?... He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."

"He will make an utter end" (*kalah hu oseh*) uses *kalah* (כָּלָה), meaning complete destruction, total consumption, or full end. God won't merely damage Nineveh; He'll obliterate it. History confirms this—Nineveh was destroyed so thoroughly in 612 BC that its location was lost for over 2,000 years until archaeological rediscovery in the 1840s.

"Affliction shall not rise up the second time" (*lo-taqum pa'amayim tzarah*) could mean:

1. Nineveh won't afflict Judah again after its destruction, or
2. God won't need to judge Nineveh twice—one judgment will suffice to destroy it completely.

Both meanings apply. Unlike Jonah's era when Nineveh repented and judgment was averted, this time judgment is final. God's patience has ended; destruction is certain and irreversible.

Historical Context

Nahum prophesied between 663 BC (after Assyria's conquest of Thebes, mentioned in 3:8) and 612 BC (before Nineveh's fall). For over a century, Assyria had terrorized the ancient Near East with brutal military campaigns. They destroyed Israel's northern kingdom (722 BC) and nearly conquered Judah during Hezekiah's reign (701 BC). Assyrian inscriptions boast of horrific atrocities—impaling victims, burning cities, deporting entire populations. Nahum announces God's judgment against Nineveh for their violence and cruelty. Unlike Jonah's earlier message that brought Nineveh to temporary repentance (c. 760 BC), Nahum declares judgment is now irreversible. The prophecy was precisely fulfilled in 612 BC when Babylon and Media destroyed Nineveh so completely that its location was lost for over 2,000 years.

Nahum demonstrates God's sovereign justice over nations—He judged Israel for covenant unfaithfulness through Assyria, then judged Assyria for exceeding their mandate with excessive cruelty. The book assures God's people that He sees oppression and will vindicate them. While fierce in judgment against the wicked, God remains 'a stronghold in the day of trouble' for those who trust Him (1:7).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Nahum 1:9 deepen your understanding of God's character, particularly His holiness, justice, and mercy?

2. What specific attitudes, thought patterns, or behaviors does this verse call you to examine and change in light of the gospel?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and His redemptive work, and how should that shape your worship and obedience?

Interlinear Text

מֶה	תַּחֲשֹׁבוֹן	אֶל	יְהוָה	כָּל	הַ
H4100	What do ye imagine	H413	against the LORD	an utter end	H1931
	H2803		H3068	H3617	
עֹשֶׂה	לֹא	תִקַּח	פַּעַם	שְ�נִי	צָרָה
he will make	H3808	shall not rise up	the second time	affliction	
H6213		H6965	H6471	H6869	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 21:11 (Parallel theme): For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.

Psalms 33:10 (References Lord): The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

Proverbs 21:30 (References Lord): There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

2 Corinthians 10:5 (Parallel theme): Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Nahum 1:11 (References Lord): There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor.

1 Samuel 26:8 (Parallel theme): Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time.

1 Samuel 3:12 (Parallel theme): In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.

