

Nahum 3:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the
prey departeth not;

Analysis

Chapter 3 opens with a cry: 'Woe to the bloody city!' (hoy ir damim). The Hebrew hoy is both lament and denunciation—a funeral dirge for the living. 'Bloody city' (ir damim) emphasizes Nineveh's violence and cruelty. 'It is all full of lies and robbery' (kullah kachash pereq mele'ah). Lies (kachash) refers to deception, false promises, and treaty violations. Robbery (pereq) suggests violent plunder and prey. 'The prey departeth not' (lo-yamish taraph) indicates constant predation—Nineveh's entire economy and empire built on conquest and exploitation. This comprehensive indictment—violence, deception, and robbery—exposes the moral bankruptcy underlying Nineveh's power and wealth. The city appeared glorious, but God sees its foundation of blood, lies, and theft. This demonstrates that God judges not merely outward actions but the fundamental character and disposition. Nineveh's entire civilization was predicated on evil, making judgment inevitable and thorough.

Historical Context

Assyrian inscriptions confirm Nahum's accusations. Kings boasted of atrocities—impaling captives, creating pyramids of skulls, deporting entire populations, burning cities. The empire's wealth came primarily from tribute and plunder extracted from conquered peoples. Nineveh itself was built with forced labor and filled with treasures stolen from defeated nations. What Assyria called glory, God called robbery and murder. The historical record vindicates Nahum's assessment: Nineveh was indeed a 'bloody city' built on violence and deception. When it fell in

612 BC, no nation mourned—instead, conquered peoples rejoiced at their oppressor's downfall (3:19). This demonstrates that empires built on injustice and cruelty, no matter how powerful, ultimately face judgment and collapse.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do modern nations or institutions similarly build prosperity on violence, exploitation, and deception while presenting themselves as civilized?
2. What does this passage teach about God's moral assessment differing radically from human glory and success?
3. How should Christians respond to systemic injustice embedded in economic and political systems?

Interlinear Text

וִי	עִיר	יָמִים	כָּל	הַ	כֶּשֶׁף	וְ	גָזָל	הַ	מְלֵא	לֵא
Woe	city	to the bloody	H3605		of lies	and robbery	it is all full	H3808		
H1945	H5892	H1818			H3585	H6563	H4392			

יָמִים	יָשׁוּב:
departeth	the prey
H4185	H2964

Additional Cross-References

Habakkuk 2:12 (Blood): Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!

Hosea 4:2 (Blood): By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

Nahum 2:12 (Parallel theme): The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.

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