

Nahum 3:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?

Analysis

Continuing the comparison with Thebes, Nahum asks: 'Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?' This rhetorical question highlights Thebes' strategic advantages—situated on the Nile with water defenses. Yet despite these natural advantages and great wealth, Thebes fell to Assyria in 663 BC. The argument is irrefutable: if Thebes with all its advantages couldn't withstand Assyria, how can Nineveh withstand God's judgment? The comparison is devastating because Nineveh itself had conquered Thebes, proving that no natural defenses or human strength can prevent determined assault. Now Babylon and Media would prove the same against Nineveh. This demonstrates a crucial biblical principle: God controls history and determines which nations rise and fall. No geographical advantage, military might, or accumulated wealth can protect a nation under divine judgment. Only righteousness and trust in God provide true security.

Historical Context

Thebes (Egyptian Waset, biblical No-Amon) was one of antiquity's greatest cities, capital of Egypt during its peak power. Located on the Nile with extensive canal systems, it enjoyed both natural defenses and agricultural prosperity. The city contained massive temples (Karnak, Luxor), vast wealth, and political prestige. Yet in 663 BC, Assyrian king Ashurbanipal conquered and sacked Thebes, carrying

away enormous plunder despite Egypt's resistance and the city's formidable defenses. This relatively recent event (within living memory when Nahum prophesied) served as powerful object lesson: if mighty Thebes could fall, so could Nineveh. The prophecy proved true when Babylon and Media conquered Nineveh in 612 BC. Both cities' ruins testify to the historical accuracy of Nahum's prophecy and the reality of divine judgment.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Thebes' fall despite its advantages warn against trusting in natural resources, geographical position, or accumulated wealth?
2. What does this passage teach about God's sovereignty over history and His ability to reverse any human empire's fortunes?
3. How should Christians maintain perspective on earthly securities knowing that no human power can ultimately resist God's purposes?

Interlinear Text

הֲתִיטְבִּי	מִנְּא	אֲמַ וְ	הַיִּשְׁכָּה	בְּיַאֲרֵי יָם	
Art thou better	No	than populous	that was situate	among the rivers	
H3190	H4996	H527	H3427	H2975	
מֵי יָם	סָבִיב	לָהּ	אֲשֶׁר	חֵי יָל	מֵי הַיָּם
that had the waters	round about	H0	H834	it whose rampart	was from the sea
H4325	H5439			H2426	H3220
מֵי הַיָּם	חֹמְתָהּ:				
was from the sea	and her wall				
H3220	H2346				

Additional Cross-References

Amos 6:2 (Parallel theme): Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?

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