

Zephaniah 2:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness.

Analysis

And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria (ve'yot yado al-tsafon ve'yoved et-Ashur)—The 'north' refers to invasion routes into Israel. Assyria, the superpower that destroyed the Northern Kingdom (722 BC), seemed invincible. Yet God will 'stretch out his hand'—a gesture of sovereign power.

And will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness—Nineveh, Assyria's capital, was one of the ancient world's greatest cities, with massive walls and sophisticated irrigation. The prophecy of it becoming 'dry like a wilderness' (tsiyah ka'midbar) seems impossible—yet it was fulfilled when Babylon and the Medes destroyed Nineveh in 612 BC, just years after Zephaniah's prophecy. The site remained desolate, its location forgotten until archaeological rediscovery in the 19th century.

Historical Context

Nineveh's fall in 612 BC to the combined Babylonian-Median forces was sudden and catastrophic. The city was burned, flooded, and abandoned. Classical writers like Xenophon passed near its ruins without recognizing it. Only in 1842 did archaeologist Paul Émile Botta begin excavating, confirming the prophecy's literal fulfillment.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does Assyria's sudden downfall warn against trusting in military might and national pride?
2. What 'impossible' prophecies or promises of God require faith that seems unreasonable by worldly standards?
3. How should the historical fulfillment of specific prophecies like Nineveh's destruction bolster confidence in unfulfilled prophecies about Christ's return?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּשְׂט	יָדוֹ	עַל	צָפֹן	וַיִּאַבֵּד	אֶת	
And he will stretch out	his hand	H5921	against the north	and destroy	H853	
H5186	H3027		H6828	H6		
אַשּׁוּר	וַיַּעַשׂ	אֶת	נִיְנוּהַ	לְשָׂמָהּ	צִיָּה	כַּמִּדְבָּר:
Assyria	and will make	H853	Nineveh	a desolation	and dry	like a wilderness
H804	H7760		H5210	H8077	H6723	H4057

Additional Cross-References

Nahum 3:7 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

Isaiah 10:12 (Parallel theme): Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will

punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

Isaiah 10:16 (Parallel theme): Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.

Nahum 1:1 (Parallel theme): The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

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