Synopsis of the Books of the Bible

Nahum

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

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Summary

A specific form of evil clearly delineated in each of Israel's principal enemies, such as Nineveh

If we were to examine closely the different characters of the nations who have been connected with the people of God, we should perhaps find in each a specific form of evil pretty clearly delineated. At all events it is so in the principal enemies of that people. Egypt, Babylon, Nineveh, are prominently marked by that which they morally represent. Egypt is the world in its natural condition, whence the people have come forth. Babylon is corruption in the activity of power, by which the people are enslaved. Nineveh is the haughty glory of the world, which recognises nothing but its own importance — the world, the open enemy of God's people, simply by its pride. She shall be judged like all the rest, and disappear for ever under the judgment of the Almighty. Jehovah has given a commandment against her, that no more of her name be sown. This judgment is so simple, that the prophecy which declares it requires very little explanation.

The character of God: the pride of man

It commences with an exhibition of the character of God, in view of that which He has to bear from the pride of man. God is jealous, and Jehovah revengeth. It is a solemn thought that, however great His patience, a day is coming which will prove that He does not bear with evil. Yet it is a comforting thought; for the vengeance of God is the deliverance of the world from the oppression and misery of the yoke of the enemy and of lust, that it may flourish under the peaceful eye of its Deliverer. No doubt, He has long allowed evil to go on. He is not impatient, as our poor hearts are. He is slow to wrath — a wrath so much the more terrible that it is the justice of One who is never impatient. He is great in power, and will not at all acquit the guilty.* Who can stand before His indignation, or abide the fierceness of His anger? {* This is ever true, and of immense importance. God never holds the guilty for innocent. It is contrary to His nature. It would not be the truth. He may put away sin, and receive the cleansed sinner; but He cannot act as if it did not exist when it does, nor be indifferent to it while He remains Himself. He may for good chastise, and to shew His government (that is, deal with sin in this respect); or He may have it entirely put away and blotted out, according to the exigencies of His own nature and glory, which is salvation for us; and both are true. But He cannot leave it anywhere as not existing or indifferent.}

But this is not all: His indignation is not vague and devastating without distinction when He gives it free course. He is good; He is a stronghold in the day of trouble. When the evil and the judgment overflow — the evil which is a judgment, and the judgment before which nothing that it reaches can stand — He is Himself the sure refuge of all that trust in Him: He Himself knows all that do so. As for the glory of the enemy, it shall be destroyed, blotted out, brought to nothing. Reckless in the midst of their pleasures, drunken and suspecting nothing, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.

The Assyrian who imagines evil against Jehovah at first prosperous: his yoke broken for ever

In Nahum 1:11 we find the one so often mentioned by the prophets — the Assyrian, who imagines evil against Jehovah. verse 12, although obscure, applies, I think, to Israel. Israel, too, alas! boasting of their security and strength according to the spirit of the world, will undergo the invasion, the overflowing of the great waters, the scourge of God. But when this passes through the land (that is, of Israel), they shall be cut down* (compare Isaiah 28:18-19; 14:25). But this scourge completes the judgment of God; and the deliverance of Israel, the prophet says, should now be complete and final (compare Isaiah 10:5, 24, 25). The yoke of the Assyrian should be broken for ever, and the proud and hostile power of the world destroyed, as the anti-christian corruption and rebellion had already been judged. The good tidings of full deliverance should be spread abroad, and Judah should keep her solemn feasts in peace. {* If not, the thought is, though the Assyrians be prosperous and safe in full prosperity, yet (as Sennacherib) when they come into Judah they shall be cut down, and then (as in Isaiah 10) Israel's deliverance should be final.}

God's partial judgment a forerunner of a future final one

I doubt not that the invasion of Sennacherib was the occasion of this prophecy; but most evidently it goes much beyond that event, and the judgment is final. This is another instance of that which we have so frequently observed in the prophets — a partial judgment, serving as a warning or an encouragement to the people of God, while it was only a forerunner of a future judgment, in which all the dealings of God would be summed up and manifested.

The wicked should no more pass through Judah; he should be utterly cut off.

Complete fulfilment of judgment when the Assyrian returns

If God permitted the total devastation and ruin of Jacob, it was because the time of judgment was come — a judgment that should not stop there. He began, no doubt, at His own house, but would He stop there? No. What, then, should be the end of the enemies of God's people, if He no longer endured evil in His own people? Let Nineveh, then, now defend herself if she could. But no, that den of lions should be invaded, and the young lions destroyed and unable to defend themselves. See the same argument at the end of Isaiah 2 and the commencement of chapter 3. Jacob was judged; the whole family, as well as Israel, emptied and ruined; and now it was the turn of the world. However great the pride of Nineveh, she was no better than others of whose ruin she was probably herself the instrument (Assyria and Egypt had long been rivals). The strongholds of the Assyrians should be like figs that fall with the first shaking, and their people without strength should be but as women. The ruin should be entire. Fire should devour them. No doubt, this had an historical fulfilment in the fall of Nineveh; but its complete accomplishment will take place when the Assyrian shall return — I do not say with respect to this city itself, which has been destroyed, but the power that will possess the territory and inherit the pride of the land of Nimrod.