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## Assyria

Assyria was a country located east of the Tigris River; the capital was Ashur also spelled as Assur, Asshur or Ashshur, from which the entire country derived its name. The Assyrian Empire encompassed a large mass of land. The Assyrians were an ethnic blending of Hurrians, Sumerians and Semites. The Assyrian culture fused elements of the Babylonians, the Hittites and the Hurrians.

From approximately 1950 B.C. to 1850 B.C. Assyria was ruled by the Babylonians. Then in circa 1800 B.C., the area came under Amorite rule, then successively under the hegemony of the Hittites, the Egyptians and the Hurrians. However, Assyria proper began to assert and consolidate itself in 1380 B.C., and in 1280 B.C. Shalmaneser I established his capital at Calah (Kalhu), a few miles south of Nineveh. Shortly thereafter a period of weakness took place, but Assyria eventually regained military and political preeminence under Ashurdan I, circa 1150 B.C. During the reign of Tiglathpileser I, circa 1110 B.C., Assyria attained greatness through foreign conquests and internal reforms; and under Tiglathpileser I the capital city was once more Ashur.

For the next two centuries, from 1100 to 900 B.C., the nation of Assyria faded almost to extinction; and it was during this decline that David and Solomon ascended. Around 900 B.C. Assyria again began to revive itself. Tulkulti-Ninurta II, then Ashurnasirpal (who was cruel beyond imagining), then Shalmaneser III, each in succession made Assyrian larger and stronger. The latter king, Shalmaneser III, was the first Assyrian to come in contact with Israel as a nation. Shalmaneser III forcefully impacted history: He invaded Urartu (present day Armenia), captured Carchemish and in 853 B.C. fought the battle of Karkar, where he encountered the axis of Benhadad of Damascus, his allies, and Ahab, king of Samaria. Ten years later Shalmaneser III received tribute payments from both Tyre and Sidon and king Jehu of

Samaria. Shalmaneser's son, Shamshiadad V married Semiramis, who ruled so successfully as regent for her son Adadnirari III. Finally, in 782 B.C., Assyria once more suffered reversals.

Then, in 746 B.C., after the ministry of Jonah, Pul or Tiglathpileser III came to the throne and the period of the second empire began. Pul was followed by Shalmaneser V, Sargon II, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. The last ruler of Assyria was Shinsharishkun; he died when Nabopolassar, king of Babylonia, and Cyaxeres, king of the Medes, destroyed Nineveh in 612 B.C. After 605 B.C., the Assyrian Empire ceased to exist.

**The following by R. B. Thieme, Jr., Pastor Emeritus, Berachah Church, Houston, Texas**

### **Historical Panorama of Assyria, Ezekiel 31:3-14**

The Assyrians prospered because of positive volition to Bible doctrine. They became great because they responded to Jonah's doctrinal teaching. The greatness of a nation always lies in its spiritual factor.

Other nations were blessed by association with Assyria. The pivot of mature believers in a nation is the origin of blessing by association.

The person providing the blessing is greater than the person receiving the blessing. The provider of the blessing has the authority; the receiver of the blessing has the response. When the blessing receiver revolts and gets discipline instead of blessing by association.

In this passage, boughs represent economic prosperity; branches represent military strength. Birds represent unbelievers and evil. When Bible doctrine is no longer believed in a nation, the birds come in to nest and take over. An empire is a nation whose greatness is so great that all the nations of that continent are blessed by association with it.

The ministry of Jonah was phenomenal in Assyria, Luke 11:29-30, 32.

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Jonah's teaching gave new power to a declining Assyria and resulted in a new empire.

The pivot was so great and the spinoff of reversionists so low in succeeding generations that Jonah's ministry added 142 years to the life of Assyria.

As the spinoff grew and evil became the thinking of the people, the nation was destroyed by the fifth cycle of discipline in 612 B.C.

Greatness in a nation is related to the spiritual heritage of Bible doctrine. But if one generation forgets the importance of Bible doctrine, then the nation begins to go down in disaster. The Assyrians' prosperity caught up with them and they forgot the source of their blessing.

### **Warnings of the Fall of Assyria**

The warning to Assyria was given in capsule prophecies, Isaiah 33:1.

Treachery is the result of loss of honor and integrity, Zephaniah 2:13.

The arrogance of the scourge, Assyria, is documented in Isaiah 10:5-8. God used Assyria as His whip against Israel. Because of this, Assyria became arrogant. They failed to realize that God had only used them, not replaced Israel as His client nation.

All nations fall because of a decision of the supreme court of heaven, Nahum 1:1-3, 9. Nahum was a Jewish prophet taken prisoner by Assyria.

The plundering of the destroyed nation is taught in Nahum 2:8-10. No military means no protection.

### **The Historical Account of the Fall of Nineveh**

#### **Background**

In B.C. 626, Ashurbanipal died after ruling Assyria from 669-626 B.C. He was succeeded by his son Sinsariskun, the last Assyrian king, 626-612 B.C. His ascension was followed by revolts. In 625 B.C., Nabopolassar of the Chaldeans captured Babylon.

In 616 B.C., all of Babylonia was under the control of Nabopolassar. Now he was ready to move north.

In 615 B.C., Cyaxares the Mede also attacked from the east.

In 614 B.C., Cyaxares and Nabopolassar arrived at the same time to fight Assyria. They did not trust each other. So Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar, married the daughter of Cyaxares.

In 613 B.C., Sinsariskun went to the Scythians for help. They were to attack the Medes.

In 612 B.C., Cyaxares met with the Scythian princes and persuaded them to double cross the Assyrians. The Scythians betrayed their alliance and this sealed the Assyrian's doom.

#### **The Fall of Assyria**

The armies of all three nations assembled at Nineveh in June of 612 B.C. From the south came the Chaldeans, from the east came the Medes, and from the north came the Scythians.

Hardcore Assyrians defeated the Scythians, then the Medes, and they fought the Chaldeans last.

The main or fourth attack came from the northeast. The hard core fighting men were on the south side of the city. The weak fighters in the north ran in fear, Nahum 2:8.

Sinsariskun burned everything he owned. One hard core group fought their way out of the city and fled to Harran.

#### **The Remnant of Assyria**

In 610 B.C., the combined armies marched on Harran. The Assyrians who fought were not defeated, but Harran was plundered.

In 609 B.C., Assuruballit, the general of the hard-core Assyrians, formed an alliance with Egypt through Pharaoh Neco. He fought Josiah, king of Judah, at Armageddon and defeated Israel, killing Josiah.

In 605 B.C., Neco fought the Chaldeans at Carchemish. This battle was one of the greatest

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in history. Neco was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar. This is when Nebuchadnezzar first saw Jerusalem.

The Assyrians disappear from history.

The Medes took most of the prisoners. The Scythians took most of the plunder. Most of the Persian art was Assyrian. A remnant of Assyrians still exist around Syria and Haran. Some Assyrians stayed with the Egyptian army.

The sons of Sennacherib went to Armenia and were the source of Armenian nobility. Some live in southern Russia, Turkey and Iran today.

The wealth and treasures of Assyria

Two thousand years of wealth was divided between three nations without any argument. No treasury was greater than this one.

Assyrian craftsmen produced the art of the Persians.

In 437 A.D., the vandals plundered Rome and took the greatest treasury in history back to Carthage. A storm sunk the treasure fleet in the Mediterranean.

### **The Biblical Account of the Fall of Nineveh**

Nahum 2:13 The elite infantry forces were destroyed.

Nahum 3:1-19 The Assyrians fell because the men of the army were women in their souls. The great leadership was gone.

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