

The Gilgamesh Epic

Found in the library of King Ashurbanipal of Assyria, the Gilgamesh Epic is a Babylonian account of the man/god Gilgamesh (associated by some with Nimrod, the founder of Nineveh). A 15 foot statue of Gilgamesh guarded the throne room of king Sargon II. Gilgamesh was recorded in a Sumerian king list as the ruler of Uruk around 2700 BC.



WELCOME TO *Fabulous* **Nineveh**

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The value that I absorb from a study of Nineveh is that the truths of God are not determined by the knowledge and perceptions of man. Two hundred years ago, Nineveh was little more than a legendary place of mythical story, maybe akin to the stories of the lost city of Atlantis. In the modern thought of 1840, many stories of the Bible, maybe especially fantastical stories such as Jonah and the big fish, were relegated to that of myth. It was a time of questioning, and “higher criticism” in biblical scholarship. Literal interpretation of scripture was being put under a magnifying glass. If Nineveh was as great a city as was described in the Bible, then where was it? Without a physical Nineveh, the accuracy of the seven books of the Bible that mentioned it was in question, and if those were not true, then what was? When faith in God’s Word crumbles, then faith in God follows close behind.

Nineveh was destroyed in the 7th century BC, and even its ruins had vanished over the centuries. No one knew whether this great capital of Assyria had ever even existed outside of the pages of the Bible. It was in this climate that Austen Henry Layard, a lawyer and self appointed archaeologist, discovered the remains of first Nimrud (Kalhu, or Biblical Calah), and then Nineveh itself. He published a book called *Nineveh and Its Remains*, a book that was wildly popular and was a tremendous verification of the accuracy of the Biblical text. What had been relegated to fable was once again known as fact.

Today, the accuracy of the Bible is still questioned by many. We are a people constantly searching for “proof” and God seems to comply by doling out new discoveries that confirm Biblical accuracy and shore up our shaky belief.

2 Nineveh

Timeline for Nineveh

DATE	EVENT	ASYRIAN KING	BIBLICAL REFERENCE
5000 BC?	Earliest known settlement of Nineveh		Genesis 10:6-11
2500 BC	Arshur , Arbel, and Nineveh thriving metropoli		
2371 BC	First Assyrian kingdom established	Sargon of Akkad	
1307 BC	First Assyrian Empire	Adad-narari	
1115 BC	Second Assyrian Empire	Tiglath-Pileser	
934 BC	Neo-Assyrian Empire established, unifying the Middle East from Egypt to the Caspian Sea	Ashur-dan II	
883-859 BC	King of Assyria filled the walls of his palace at Calah(Nimrud)with scenes of destruction and cruelty	Assurnasirpal II	Omri, king of Israel
858-824 BC	Ahab, king of Israel, joins a coalition of 12 kings against Shalmaneser III	Shalmaneser III	Ahab, king of Israel (event not mentioned in the Bible)
	Tribute received from Tyre, Sidon, and Jehu	Shalmaneser III	Jehu king of Israel
770-750 BC?	Assyrian power is at a low point. God's warning of judgment given to Nineveh. Because of their repentance, the destruction of Nineveh is delayed by nearly 150 years.	Assur-dan III	Jonah Jeroboam II king of Israel
752 BC	Ahaz meets with Tiglath-Pileser III to seek his aid. Policy of deportation of Assyria's conquered enemies begins	Tiglath-pileser III	Ahaz 2 Kings 16:5-9 Isaiah 7:4-17; 8:4-8 2 Chron. 28:16-22
731-722 BC	Hoshea stopped paying tribute and appealed to Egypt instead. He was seized and put in prison.	Shalmaneser V	Hoshea – last king of Israel 2 Kings 17:1-4
	Israelites deported to Assyria (27,290 people by Sargon II's records!)	Sargon II	2 Kings 17:5-6
701 BC	Nineveh becomes capital of Assyria Defeat of Lachish	Sennacherib	2 Kings 18:13-19:36 Hezekiah, king of Judah
697-642 BC	Both of these Assyrian kings mention Manasseh, king of Judah in their records.	Esarhadon Ashurbanipal	Manasseh, king of Judah
612 BC	Assyrian Empire collapses under attack by the Medes, Scythians, and Babylonian tribes. Nineveh is destroyed		As prophesied by Nahum, and Zeph. 2:13-15
1849	First publication of "Nineveh and Its Remains" by Layard		

Sovereign God

We often refer to “the God of the Israelites”, but Nineveh’s story reminds us that He is also the God of the Ninevites, the God of the cruel and mighty Assyrians, the God of every king, and nation, and people of the world. Whether He is recognized and revered or not, it is the one God, the God of the Israelites, who allows and determines the comings and goings of every power, every country, every person in the world.

As ancient as Nineveh is, God was there. In Genesis 9 and 10 God records the peoples who descended from Noah’s sons. From Ham, the son who was guilty of some not fully described indiscretion with his drunk father, came Canaan, who was cursed as a punishment for his father, and Cush, the father of Nimrod, the founder of Nineveh. What are some of the things we learn about Nimrod from Genesis 10:8-12? _____

Why do you think God gives us such detail? _____

Thousands of years later, Assyria is still a mighty nation, known also for their cruelty. Consider these words inscribed on the palace walls of Assurnasirpal II:

“I built a pillar over against his city gate, and I flayed all the chief men...and I covered the pillar with their skins...some I impaled upon the pillar on stakes, and ...cut off the limbs of the officers... Many captives I burned with fire, and many I took as living captives. From some I cut off their hands and from others I cut off their noses, their ears, and their fingers, of many I put out the eyes. I made one pillar of the living, and another of heads, and I bound their heads to posts round about the city...”

(Hoerth and McRay 48-53)

Much of the known world of the day lived under the threat of Assyrian domination. For nearly 300 years, they were THE power in the Middle East. Imagine the terror their vassals and enemies must have felt! Little did they, or anyone else, know the role that God had designed for them to play. Jonah sure didn’t see them as an aid to God’s plan for Israel! How many Ninevites were saved by Jonah’s prophetic words according to Jonah 4:11? _____

Sure enough, Nineveh’s wavering strength was rallied for another 150 years, long enough to conquer and scatter the northern kingdom of Israel before their own fall. What’s good, and what’s bad gets a little confusing for us here, just as it did for Jonah. Assyria did not suddenly get nice, and if they had, would they have been able to carry out God’s intent? My answer here can only be that God’s ways are not our ways! But lest the world be intimidated by an arrogant bully of a nation, God lets them know, through his prophet Nahum, that destruction will soon come to Nineveh as well. From historical records outside the Bible, we see amazingly specific fulfillments of the prophecies Nahum made some 50 years before Nineveh’s fall. Nineveh’s destruction was so complete, that its existence was though only mythical. What does Nahum foresee in 1:9,14? _____

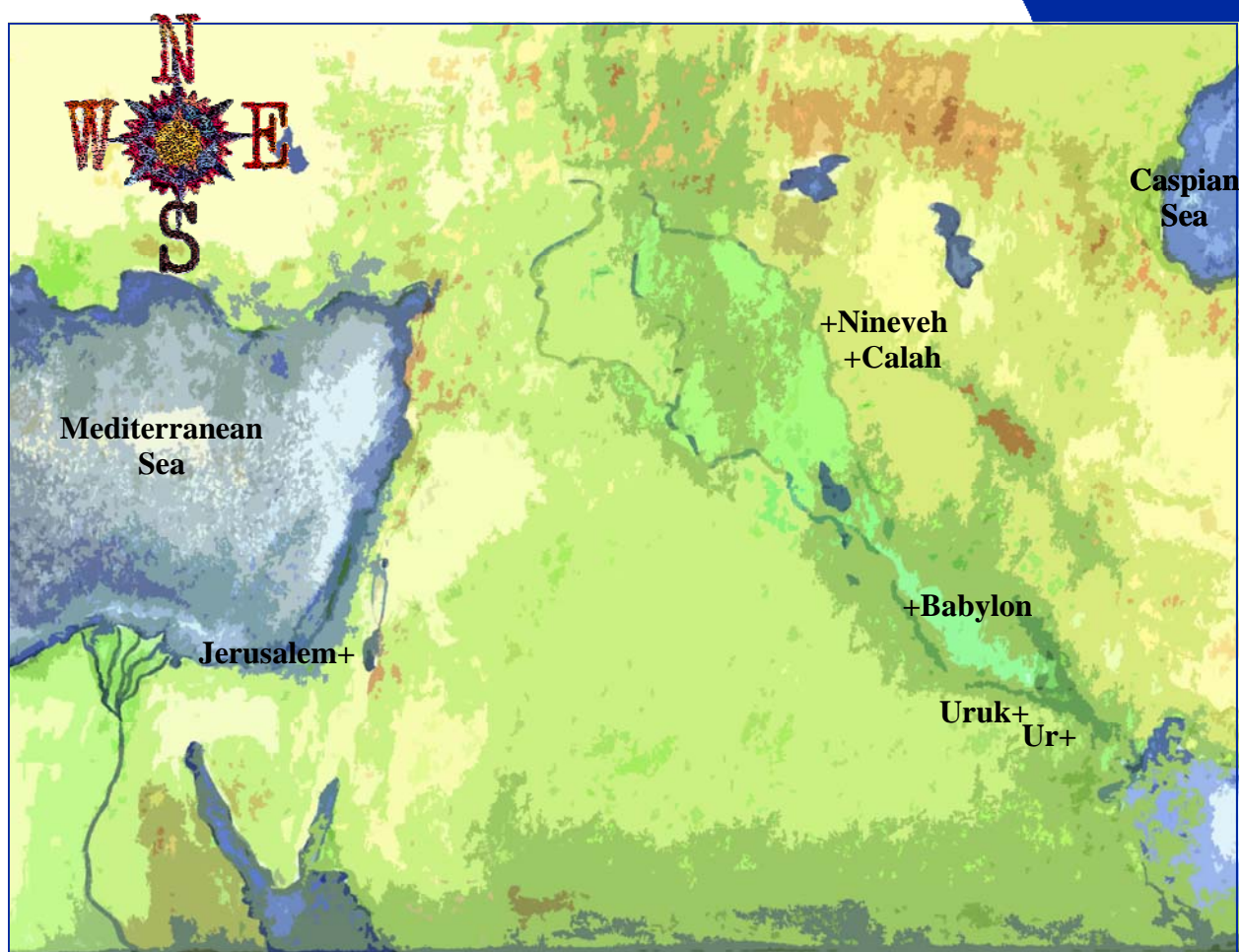
_____ The statue of the god Ishtar was found headless in the debris of Nineveh’s ruins. What does Nahum say in 1:14? _____

The Babylonian Chronicle describes the Assyrian army deserting, excavations of Nineveh have revealed charred wood, and layers of ash, and in Bibliotheca Historica, Diodorus wrote that heavy rains caused a river to flood and break down part of Nineveh’s walls. (Richards 469) What God says will happen will happen!

The Victorians of Layard’s day were unsettled by the reality of Nineveh. How could such a great, and powerful city be so thoroughly wiped out of existence, and even memory? It was a challenging thought to the then powerful British Empire. It should be equally challenging for us today. Where do we put our trust? Who do we think God cherishes? --



4 Nineveh



What do you know about each of these places on the map?

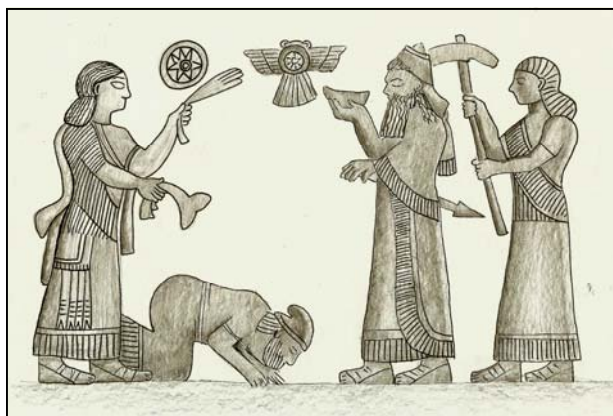
Nineveh _____

Calah _____

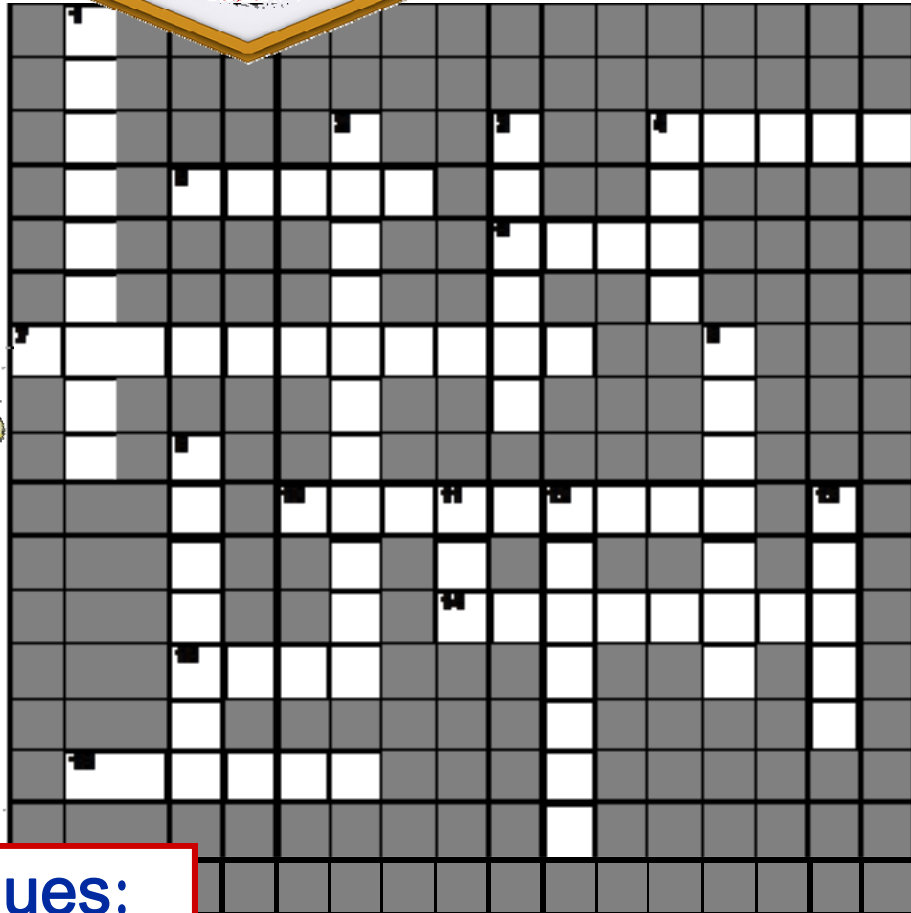
Ur _____

Babylon _____

Uruk _____



This is a sketch of one scene from the seven foot tall Black Obelisk which shows tribute being paid to the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III. In this particular scene, the cuneiform inscription describes Jehu the Israelite king, bowing before King Shalmaneser. This is a rare occurrence of an extra-biblical source mentioning two biblical kings.



Puzzle clues:

Across

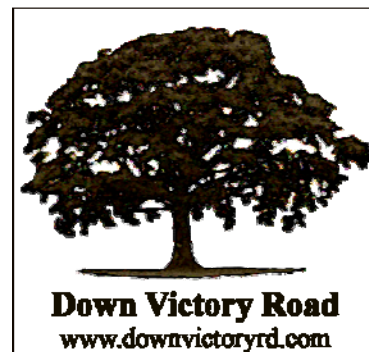
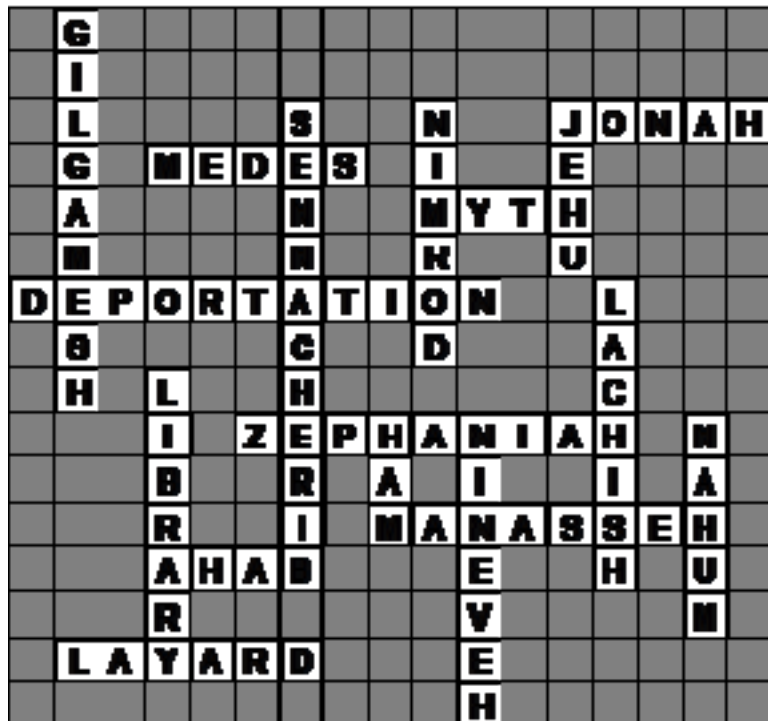
- 4 his warning saved Nineveh for a time (5)
- 5 One of Nineveh's conquerors (5)
- 6 stories of Nineveh were thought to be a _____ (4)
- 7 policy begun by Tiglath-pileser III (11)
- 10 prophesied the fall of Nineveh (9)
- 14 king of Judah mentioned in the records of two Assyrian kings (8)
- 15 Joined a coalition of 12 kings against Assyria (4)
- 16 British lawyer who excavated Nineveh in the 1840s (6)

Down

- 1 an epic tale first found in Assyrian libraries (9)

- 2 Nineveh became capital of Assyria during his reign (11)
- 3 founder of Nineveh according to Gen. 10:8-11 (6)
- 4 Israelite king depicted bowing to Shalmaneser III (4)
- 8 Judean town destroyed by Assyria (7)
- 9 Ashurbanipal was known for his vast one found at Nineveh (7)
- 11 the son of Noah whose descendant establish Nineveh Gen. 10 (3)
- 12 three miles in length and 1 1/2 miles wide, surrounded by a wall 8 miles long (7)
- 13 Old Testament book that prophesied the fall of Nineveh (5)

6 Nineveh



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Map

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